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ESSAYS AND  
BELLES LETTRES

CURTIS' PRUE AND I &  
LOTUS-EATING. WITH  
AN INTRODUCTION BY  
HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE

THE PUBLISHERS OF *EVERYMAN'S*  
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BIOGRAPHY  
ROMANCE



IN TWO STYLES OF BINDING, CLOTH,  
FLAT BACK, COLOURED TOP, AND  
LEATHER, ROUND CORNERS, GILT TOP.

LONDON: J. M. DENT & SONS, LTD.  
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.





MOST  
CURRENT  
FOR THAT  
THEY COME  
HOME TO  
MEN'S  
BUSINESS  
& BOSOMS  
LORD BACON

PRUE & I  
LOTUS  
EATING *by*  
G·W·CURTIS

EVERY  
MAN  
I WILL  
GO  
WITH  
THEE &  
BE THY  
GUIDE



IN THY  
MOST  
NEED  
TO  
GO  
BY  
THY  
SIDE

LONDON: PUBLISHED  
by J·M·DENT & SONS·LD  
AND IN NEW YORK  
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## INTRODUCTION

THE *Elizabeth and Ann*, sailing from the port of London in May 1635, brought to New England seven passengers who were duly certified by their respective Ministers and Justices of the Peace as having conformed to the orders and discipline of the Church of England, and taken the oaths of allegiance and supremacy; and it is added that "they were no subsidy men." The last name on the list of seven in Hatten's "List of Emigrants to America" was that of Henry Curtis, from whom George William Curtis was descended in the sixth generation. The men of the family were notable for independence of judgment and action; one of them, John Curtis, of Worcester, Mass., was an outspoken loyalist when the War of the Revolution broke out, and was banished from the town; but was taken back later without, apparently, any recantation of opinions on his part.

The great grandson of this outspoken loyalist was George Curtis, who removed to Providence, married the daughter of the Chief Justice of Rhode Island, and in 1824 became the father of George William Curtis. He was conspicuous for integrity, courtesy, and cultivation of taste. In one of the most delightful chapters in *Prue and I*—"Sea from Shore"—Mr. Curtis has recorded his impressions of the wharves of Providence as they appealed to his boyish imagination, sensitive to colour, to the subtle sug-



gestions of odour, to hints of adventure in remote countries. He was fortunate in his companionship with his brother Burrill, a boy of rare beauty and fineness of nature, who looked, in his brother's words, "as I am sure Philip Sidney looked when he was a boy."

The education of the brothers was both irregular and fortunate; and one of its happiest phases was the influence of Emerson, one of the most liberating and inspiring thinkers who have appeared in America. From 1842 to 1844 the brothers were "boarders and boarders only" at Brook Farm, that interesting experiment in plain living and high thinking which was one of the expressions of the stirring of the New England spirit, breaking away from Puritanism. Emerson, who was as witty as he was wise, described it as "a perpetual picnic, a French Revolution in small, an Age of Reason in a patty pan." To the Curtis brothers it was a period of stiff work in the languages, chemistry and music, and free and stimulating talk with the ardent and often interesting apostles of the new thought which came from Germany by way of Coleridge, and was modified and extended by the keen, penetrating New England intelligence, and by a good deal of very human fun. "We were thrown into convulsions of laughter at the sight of G. W. C. dressed as Fanny Elssler, making courtesies and pirouetting down the path," writes one of the chroniclers of Brook Farm. The brothers were embodiments of beauty and vigour; a visitor to the Farm reports that they "looked like young Greek Gods." In later years George William Curtis had a singular distinction of manner,



speech, and carriage, with a voice of beautiful musical quality. Later the brothers took up their residence with an elderly farmer in Concord, dividing their time between work in the fields and study, with delightful interludes of companionship with Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Ellery Channing and other men of note. In August 1846, Mr. Curtis sailed for Europe, spending four successive winters in Rome, Berlin, Paris, Egypt and Palestine, becoming a keen observer of men and manners, making acquaintance with life and art, and saturating himself with the atmosphere of the Old World without losing his independence of judgment or that freshness of feeling which made him to the very end a winning teacher of the ethics and practice of idealism.

Returning from Europe, with an impressionable imagination and a fund of vivid reminiscences, Mr. Curtis wrote *The Howadji in Syria*, and *Nile Notes of a Howadji*, two books saturated with the colour and mystery of the nearer East. The young writer was captivated by the sensuous beauty of a world little known to Americans of that time; and the rich colour and ardent style of these forerunners of the literature of travel in the Orient, made a distinct impression, especially on young readers. In the summer of 1851, Mr. Curtis made various little journeys to points of interest nearer home. He saw a number of summer resorts then at the height of their popularity: Niagara, Sharon, Nahant, Newport. There was infinite relish in his enjoyment of the natural charms of these impressive or picturesque localities, and in his amused enjoyment of the follies of fashion which in a mild, unsophisticated New

World way made them the happy hunting-grounds of the satirical and cynical. Mr. Curtis was too wholesome and kindly for cynicism, but he had a quick eye for pretension and sham, and a happy gift for social satire, as *The Potiphar Papers*, published a year later, showed. The habit of writing was already established, and a record of these short journeys took the form of a series of letters to the *New York Tribune*, and, later, of *Lotus-Eating*; with little illustrative notes by Kensett, one of the most popular painters of the day, which contributed to the charm of a volume of scenic and social observation, necessarily ephemeral in form, but which has the qualities of Mr. Curtis's nature: his kindly temper, his humorous mood, his easy and opulent style. The comparison of the Hudson and the Rhine in the opening chapter assumes a general unfamiliarity with the two rivers which ceased long ago, and is written with a certain simplicity and youthful pleasure which the more sophisticated temper of to-day is likely to regard as signs of an immaturity happily outgrown. There is, however, no pleasanter report of the comfortable, easy, and optimistic social life of the middle of the last century than *Lotus-Eating*; nor is there a more refreshing contrast with the subtle, elaborate, highly sophisticated studies of places and people which have taken the place of these simple, old-fashioned impressions of a quieter, less troubled age than ours.

The author of *Lotus-Eating* was a tireless worker and a man of many interests, and the sensuous delight of the early books in the languorous East was the prelude to a career of sustained and arduous

activity in several fields. Mr. Curtis became, at the very beginning and remained to the end, one of the most eloquent and winning speakers the country has known, and in an age of accomplished orators easily held a first place. He had a singularly courteous attitude toward his audience, even in the moments when he challenged their deepest convictions and antagonized their bitterest prejudices; in the flood of political discussions he never ceased to be the high-bred gentleman, and his courage was as conspicuous as his courtesy. In debate he was a Prince Rupert in daring and in chivalry. In body, mind and spirit he was a man of rare harmony and symmetry; his bearing on the platform was singularly graceful and dignified; his voice musical in tone and modulation; his style in political discussion, direct and persuasive. On academic and literary occasions he was the cultivated speaker, happy in literary reference and the fortunate phrase.

He was also during many laborious years a working editor and a regular contributor to the newspapers and magazines. His earliest connection of this kind was with *Putnam's Magazine*, and from his articles in this periodical two of his most popular books came: *The Potiphar Papers*, a volume of social satire, and *Prue and I*, a book of the heart, in which the idealist, the lover, the artist and the man of Letters combine to define freely and eloquently the creed of Idealism in a view of life which exacts a morality that rises into the reign of poetry. In no other of Mr. Curtis's books do highmindedness, chivalrous feeling, spontaneous loyalty to the finest and highest ends of life, ingrained and vigorous

optimism, shine with so pure and beautiful a ray. The simplicity of feeling, unabashed romance, flowing and refined sentiment, richness of imagery, and beauty of style so intimately expressive of the thought and feeling explain Lowell's message: "Had Letters kept you, every wreath were yours." The book is redolent of far-reaching associations with the larger world; but its deepest note is expressed by the old book-keeper: the harmony of the simplest life and the plainest surroundings with the finest standards and the highest idealism. In our more restrained and self-conscious age, *Prue and I* has an old-fashioned courage of emotion, a frankness of feeling, and bravery of sentiment which give it an air of belonging to an outworn past; but since the things it deals with are the immortal interests of the human spirit and its manner has a saving touch of nobility, it may be that a less worldly time will crave again its unworldly beauty of love and purity.

In 1859 Mr. Curtis was editing *Harper's Weekly* and publishing his only novel, *Trumps*, in its columns. The Civil War was in the near future, and there were no more carefully reasoned and clearly-written editorials on the situation and the questions involved than those that appeared in this very influential journal. In its columns the editor developed another style, and in the *Easy Chair* touched the arts and manners of the time with a grace of diction and a charm of manner which made him at once a critic of art and a preacher of morals whose word was as light and winning as his thought and purpose were serious.

Of his statesmanlike service to the country in its

public life this is not the place to speak; in ardent antagonism to slavery, in searching and unsparing arraignment of the spoilsmen and the spoils system in American politics, and in patient and untiring advocacy of the reform of the Civil Service, his commanding ability, dauntless courage and winning oratory made him one of the foremost personalities in a series of agitations which have not only freed the country from the reproach of slavery, but will ultimately free its politics from greed and corruption.

Mr. Curtis died on the last day of August, 1892. There were many among his friends who felt that his ardour for reform had deprived the country of a man of Letters who would have enriched its literature as Addison and Steele enriched the literature of England while they touched lightly the manners and morals of the time; it is quite certain that he gave his country and his age a shining example of a stainless career in the storm of a great crisis, and that to young men especially he made politics a profession worthy of a Chevalier Bayard.

HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE.

The following is a list of the Works of George William Curtis :—

Nile Notes by a Traveller, 1851; Lotus-Eating, a Summer Book, 1852; The Wanderer in Syria, 1852; Prue and I, 1856, 1884, 1892; The Potiphar Papers ("Putnam's Monthly"), 1856, 1866; The Howadji in Syria, 1857; Nile Notes of a Howadji, 1857; A Rhyme of Rhode Island and the Times, etc., 1864; Sunnyside Book (in collaboration with other authors), 1871; Eulogy on Charles Sumner, 1874; Biographical Sketch of T. Winthrop (prefixed to the latter's "Cecil Dreme"), 1876; Life, Character, and Writings of W. C. Bryant, Commemorative Address, 1879; Eulogy on Wendell Phillips, 1884; Party and Patronage, Addresses to National Civil-

Service Reform League, 1890, 1892 ; From the Easy Chair, Essays, 1892 ; Orations and Addresses, ed. by C. E. Norton, 1894.

Curtis edited : Rural Essays, by A. J. Dowring, with memoir of author, 1853 ; J. L. Motley's Correspondence, 1889 ; and " Modern Ghosts " (selected and translated from Maupassant and other Authors), to which he supplied an Introduction, 1890.

Early Letters : To J. S. Dwight, Brook Farm and Concord, Edited by G. W. Cooke, 1898.

Life : C. E. Fitch, Address in Memory of Chancellor G. W. Curtis, 1892 ; W. Winter, George William Curtis : a Eulogy, 1893 ; Commemorative Addresses on, ed. by P. Godwin, 1893 ; E. Cary, George William Curtis (" American Men of Letters "), 1894.

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TO  
MRS. HENRY W. LONGFELLOW,  
IN MEMORY OF THE HAPPY HOURS AT OUR  
CASTLES IN SPAIN



## A WORD TO THE GENTLE READER

AN old book-keeper, who wears a white cravat and black trousers in the morning, who rarely goes to the opera, and never dines out, is clearly a person of no fashion and of no superior sources of information. His only journey is from his house to his office; his only satisfaction is in doing his duty; his only happiness is in Prue and his children.

What romance can such a life have? What stories can such a man tell?

Yet I think, sometimes, when I look up from the parquet at the opera, and see Aurelia smiling in the boxes, and holding her court of love, and youth, and beauty, that the historians have not told of a fairer queen, nor the travellers seen devouter homage. And when I remember that it was in misty England that quaint old George Herbert sang of the—

“Sweet day so cool, so calm, so bright—  
The bridal of the earth and sky,”

I am sure that I see days as lovely in our clearer air, and do not believe that Italian sunsets have a more gorgeous purple or a softer gold.

So, as the circle of my little life revolves, I console myself with believing, what I cannot help believing, that a man need not be a vagabond to enjoy the sweetest charm of travel, but that all countries and all times repeat themselves in his experience. This is an old philosophy, I am told, and much favoured by those who have travelled; and I cannot but be glad that my faith has such a fine name and such competent witnesses. I am assured, however, upon the other hand, that such a faith is only imagination. But, if that be true, imagination is as good as many

## 4 A Word to the Gentle Reader

voyages—and how much cheaper!—a consideration which an old book-keeper can never afford to forget.

I have not found, in my experience, that travellers always bring back with them the sunshine of Italy or the elegance of Greece. They tell us that there are such things, and that they have seen them; but, perhaps, they saw them, as the apples in the garden of the Hesperides were sometimes seen—over the wall. I prefer the fruit which I can buy in the market to that which a man tells me he saw in Sicily, but of which there is no flavour in his story. Others, like Moses Primrose, bring us a gross of such spectacles as we prefer not to see; so that I begin to suspect a man must have Italy and Greece in his heart and mind, if he would ever see them with his eyes.

I know that this may be only a device of that compassionate imagination designed to comfort me, who shall never take but one other journey than my daily beat. Yet there have been wise men who taught that all scenes are but pictures upon the mind; and if I can see them as I walk the street that leads to my office, or sit at the office-window looking into the court, or take a little trip down the bay or up the river, why are not my pictures as pleasant and as profitable as those which men travel for years, at great cost of time, and trouble, and money, to behold?

For my part, I do not believe that any man can see softer skies than I see in Prue's eyes; nor hear sweeter music than I hear in Prue's voice; nor find a more heaven-lighted temple than I know Prue's mind to be. And when I wish to please myself with a lovely image of peace and contentment, I do not think of the plain of Sharon, nor of the valley of Enna, nor of Arcadia, nor of Claude's pictures; but, feeling that the fairest fortune of my life is the right to be named with her, I whisper gently, to myself, with a smile—for it seems as if my very heart smiled within me, when I think of her—"Prue and I."

# PRUE AND I

## DINNER-TIME

“Within this hour it will be dinner-time ;  
I'll view the manners of the town,  
Peruse the traders, gaze upon the buildings.”  
*Comedy of Errors.*

IN the warm afternoons of the early summer, it is my pleasure to stroll about Washington Square and along the Fifth Avenue, at the hour when the diners-out are hurrying to the tables of the wealthy and refined. I gaze with placid delight upon the cheerful expanse of white waistcoat that illumines those streets at that hour, and mark the variety of emotions that swell beneath all that purity. A man going out to dine has a singular cheerfulness of aspect. Except for his gloves, which fit so well, and which he has carefully buttoned, that he may not make an awkward pause in the hall of his friend's house, I am sure he would search his pocket for a cent to give the wan beggar at the corner. It is impossible just now, my dear woman ; but God bless you !

It is pleasant to consider that simple suit of black. If my man be young and only lately cognizant of the rigours of the social law, he is a little nervous at being seen in his dress suit—body coat and black trousers—before sunset. For in the last days of May the light lingers long over the freshly leafed trees in the Square, and lies warm along the Avenue. All winter the sun has not been permitted to see dress-coats. They come out only with the stars, and fade with ghosts, before the dawn. Except, haply, they be brought homeward before breakfast in an early twilight of hackney-coach. Now, in the budding

and bursting summer, the sun takes his revenge, and looks aslant over the tree-tops and the chimneys upon the most unimpeachable garments. A cat may look upon a king.

I know my man at a distance. If I am chatting with the nursery maids around the fountain, I see him upon the broad walk of Washington Square and detect him by the freshness of his movement, his springy gait. Then the white waistcoat flashes in the sun.

"Go on, happy youth," I exclaim aloud, to the great alarm of the nursery maids, who suppose me to be an innocent insane person suffered to go at large, unattended,—*"go on, and be happy with fellow waistcoats over fragrant wines."*

It is hard to describe the pleasure in this amiable spectacle of a man going out to dine. I, who am a quiet family man, and take a quiet family cut at four o'clock; or, when I am detained down town by a false quantity in my figures, who run into Delmonico's and seek comfort in a cutlet, am rarely invited to dinner and have few white waistcoats. Indeed, my dear Prue tells me that I have but one in the world, and I often want to confront my eager young friends as they bound along, and ask abruptly, *"What do you think of a man whom one white waistcoat suffices?"*

By the time I have eaten my modest repast, it is the hour for the diners-out to appear. If the day is unusually soft and sunny, I hurry my simple meal a little, that I may not lose any of my favourite spectacle. Then I saunter out. If you met me you would see that I am also clad in black. But black is my natural colour, so that it begets no false theories concerning my intentions. Nobody, meeting me in full black, supposes that I am going to dine out. That sombre hue is professional with me. It belongs to book-keepers as to clergymen, physicians, and undertakers. We wear it because we follow solemn callings. Saving men's bodies and souls, or

keeping the machinery of business well wound, are such sad professions that it is becoming to drape dolefully those who adopt them.

I wear a white cravat, too, but nobody supposes that it is in any danger of being stained by Lafitte. It is a limp cravat with a craven tie. It has none of the dazzling dash of the white that my young friends sport, or, I should say, sported; for the white cravat is now abandoned to the sombre professions of which I spoke. My young friends suspect that the flunkeys of the British nobleman wear such ties, and they have, therefore, discarded them. I am sorry to remark, also, an uneasiness, if not downright scepticism, about the white waistcoat. Will it extend to shirts, I ask myself with sorrow.

But there is something pleasanter to contemplate during these quiet strolls of mine, than the men who are going to dine out, and that is, the women. They roll in carriages to the happy houses which they shall honour, and I strain my eyes in at the carriage window to see their cheerful faces as they pass. I have already dined; upon beef and cabbage, probably, if it is boiled day. I am not expected at the table to which Aurelia is hastening, yet no guest there shall enjoy more than I enjoy,—nor so much, if he considers the meats the best part of the dinner. The beauty of the beautiful Aurelia I see and worship as she drives by. The vision of many beautiful Aurelias driving to dinner, is the mirage of that pleasant journey of mine along the avenue. I do not envy the Persian poets, on those afternoons, nor long to be an Arabian traveller. For I can walk that street, finer than any of which the Ispahan architects dreamed; and I can see sultanas as splendid as the enthusiastic and exaggerating Orientals describe.

But not only do I see and enjoy Aurelia's beauty, I delight in her exquisite attire. In these warm days she does not wear so much as the lightest shawl. She is clad only in spring sunshine. It glitters in the soft darkness of her hair. It touches

the diamonds, the opals, the pearls, that cling to her arms, and neck, and fingers. They flash back again, and the gorgeous silks glisten, and the light laces flutter, until the stately Aurelia seems to me, in tremulous radiance, swimming by.

I doubt whether you who are to have the inexpressible pleasure of dining with her, and even of sitting by her side, will enjoy more than I. For my pleasure is inexpressible, also. And it is in this greater than yours, that I see all the beautiful ones who are to dine at various tables, while you only see your own circle, although that, I will not deny, is the most desirable of all.

Beside, although my person is not present at your dinner, my fancy is. I see Aurelia's carriage stop, and behold white-gloved servants opening wide doors. There is a brief glimpse of magnificence for the dull eyes of the loiterers outside; then the door closes. But my fancy went in with Aurelia. With her, it looks at the vast mirror, and surveys her form at length in the Psyche-glass. It gives the final shake to the skirt, the last flirt to the embroidered handkerchief, carefully held, and adjusts the bouquet, complete as a tropic nestling in orange leaves. It descends with her, and marks the faint blush upon her cheek at the thought of her exceeding beauty; the consciousness of the most beautiful woman, that the most beautiful woman is entering the room. There is the momentary hush, the subdued greeting, the quick glance of the Aurelias who have arrived earlier, and who perceive in a moment the hopeless perfection of that attire; the courtly gaze of gentlemen, who feel the serenity of that beauty. All this my fancy surveys; my fancy, Aurelia's invisible cavalier.

You approach with hat in hand and the thumb of your left hand in your waistcoat pocket. You are polished and cool, and have an irreproachable repose of manner. There are no improper wrinkles in your cravat; your shirt-bosom does not bulge; the trousers are accurate about your admirable boot. But you



look very stiff and brittle. You are a little bullied by your unexceptionable shirt-collar, which interdicts perfect freedom of movement in your head. You are elegant, undoubtedly, but it seems as if you might break and fall to pieces, like a porcelain vase, if you were roughly shaken.

Now, here, I have the advantage of you. My fancy quietly surveying the scene, is subject to none of these embarrassments. My fancy will not utter commonplaces. That will not say to the superb lady, who stands with her flowers, incarnate May, "What a beautiful day, Miss Aurelia." That will not feel constrained to say something, when it has nothing to say; nor will it be obliged to smother all the pleasant things that occur, because they would be too flattering to express. My fancy perpetually murmurs in Aurelia's ear, "Those flowers would not be fair in your hand, if you yourself were not fairer. That diamond necklace would be gaudy, if your eyes were not brighter. That queenly movement would be awkward, if your soul were not queenlier."

You could not say such things to Aurelia, although, if you are worthy to dine at her side, they are the very things you are longing to say. What insufferable stuff you are talking about the weather, and the opera, and Alboni's delicious voice, and Newport, and Saratoga! They are all very pleasant subjects, but do you suppose Ixion talked Thessalian politics when he was admitted to dine with Juno?

I almost begin to pity you, and to believe that a scarcity of white waistcoats is true wisdom. For now dinner is announced, and you, O rare felicity, are to hand down Aurelia. But you run the risk of tumbling her expansive skirt, and you have to drop your hat upon a chance chair, and wonder, *en passant*, who will wear it home, which is annoying. My fancy runs no such risk; is not at all solicitous about its hat, and glides by the side of Aurelia, stately as she. There! you stumble on the stair, and are vexed at your own awkwardness, and are

sure you saw the ghost of a smile glimmer along that superb face at your side. My fancy doesn't tumble down-stairs, and what kind of looks it sees upon Aurelia's face, are its own secret.

Is it any better, now you are seated at table? Your companion eats little because she wishes little. You eat little because you think it is elegant to do so. It is a shabby, second-hand elegance, like your brittle behaviour. It is just as foolish for you to play with the meats, when you ought to satisfy your healthy appetite generously, as it is for you, in the drawing-room, to affect that cool indifference when you have real and noble interests.

I grant you that fine manners, if you please, are a fine art. But is not monotony the destruction of art? Your manners, O happy Ixion, banqueting with Juno, are Egyptian. They have no perspective, no variety. They have no colour, no shading. They are all on a dead level; they are flat. Now, for you are a man of sense, you are conscious that those wonderful eyes of Aurelia see straight through all this net-work of elegant manners in which you have entangled yourself, and that consciousness is uncomfortable to you. It is another trick in the game for me, because those eyes do not pry into my fancy. How can they, since Aurelia does not know of my existence?

Unless, indeed, she should remember the first time I saw her. It was only last year, in May. I had dined, somewhat hastily, in consideration of the fine day, and of my confidence that many would be wending dinnerwards that afternoon. I saw my Prue comfortably engaged in seating the trousers of Adoniram, our eldest boy—an economical care to which my darling Prue is not unequal, even in these days and in this town—and then hurried toward the avenue. It is never much thronged at that hour. The moment is sacred to dinner. As I paused at the corner of Twelfth Street, by the church, you remember, I saw an apple-woman, from whose stores I

determined to finish my dessert, which had been imperfect at home. But, mindful of meritorious and economical Prue, I was not the man to pay exorbitant prices for apples, and while still haggling with the wrinkled Eve who had tempted me, I became suddenly aware of a carriage approaching, and, indeed, already close by. I raised my eyes, still munching an apple which I held in one hand, while the other grasped my walking-stick (true to my instincts of dinner guests, as young women to a passing wedding or old ones to a funeral), and beheld Aurelia!

Old in this kind of observation as I am, there was something so graciously alluring in the look that she cast upon me, as unconsciously, indeed, as she would have cast it upon the church, that, fumbling hastily for my spectacles to enjoy the boon more fully, I thoughtlessly advanced upon the apple-stand, and, in some indescribable manner, tripping, down we all fell into the street, old woman, apples, baskets, stand, and I, in promiscuous confusion. As I struggled there, somewhat bewildered, yet sufficiently self-possessed to look after the carriage, I beheld that beautiful woman looking at us through the back-window (you could not have done it; the integrity of your shirt-collar would have interfered,) and smiling pleasantly, so that her going around the corner was like a gentle sunset, so seemed she to disappear in her own smiling; or—if you choose, in view of the apple difficulties—like a rainbow after a storm.

If the beautiful Aurelia recalls that event, she may know of my existence; not otherwise. And even then she knows me only as a funny old gentleman, who, in his eagerness to look at her, tumbled over an apple-woman.

My fancy from that moment followed her. How grateful I was to the wrinkled Eve's extortion, and to the untoward tumble, since it procured me the sight of that smile. I took my sweet revenge from that. For I knew that the beautiful Aurelia entered the house of her host with beaming eyes, and my

fancy heard her sparkling story. You consider yourself happy because you are sitting by her and helping her to a lady-finger, or a macaroon, for which she smiles. But I was her theme for ten mortal minutes. She was my bard, my blithe historian. She was the Homer of my luckless Trojan fall. She set my mishap to music, in telling it. Think what it is to have inspired Urania; to have called a brighter beam into the eyes of Miranda, and do not think so much of passing Aurelia the mottoes, my dear young friend.

There was the advantage of not going to that dinner. Had I been invited, as you were, I should have pestered Prue about the buttons on my white waistcoat, instead of leaving her placidly piecing adolescent trousers. She would have been flustered, fearful of being too late, of tumbling the garment, of soiling it, fearful of offending me in some way, (admirable woman!) I, in my natural impatience, might have let drop a thoughtless word, which would have been a pang in her heart and a tear in her eye, for weeks afterward.

As I walked nervously up the avenue (for I am unaccustomed to prandial recreations), I should not have had that solacing image of quiet Prue, and the trousers, as the background in the pictures of the gay figures I passed, making each, by contrast, fairer. I should have been wondering what to say and do at the dinner. I should surely have been very warm, and yet not have enjoyed the rich, waning sunlight. Need I tell you that I should not have stopped for apples, but instead of economically tumbling into the street with apples and apple-women, whereby I merely rent my trousers across the knee, in a manner that Prue can readily, and at little cost, repair, I should, beyond peradventure, have split a new dollar-pair of gloves in the effort of straining my large hands into them, which would, also, have caused me additional redness in the face, and renewed fluttering.

Above all, I should not have seen Aurelia passing

in her carriage, nor would she have smiled at me, nor charmed my memory with her radiance, nor the circle at dinner with the sparkling Iliad of my woes. Then at the table, I should not have sat by her. You would have had that pleasure; I should have led out the maiden aunt from the country, and have talked poultry, when I talked at all. Aurelia would not have remarked me. Afterward, in describing the dinner to her virtuous parents, she would have concluded, "and one old gentleman, whom I didn't know."

No, my polished friend, whose elegant repose of manner I yet greatly commend, I am content, if you are. How much better it was that I was not invited to that dinner, but was permitted, by a kind fate, to furnish a subject for Aurelia's wit.

There is one other advantage in sending your fancy to dinner, instead of going yourself. It is, that then the occasion remains wholly fair in your memory. You, who devote yourself to dining out, and who are to be daily seen affably sitting down to such feasts, as I know mainly by hearsay—by the report of waiters, guests, and others who were present—you cannot escape the little things that spoil the picture, and which the fancy does not see.

For instance, in handing you the *potage à la Bisque*, at the very commencement of this dinner to-day, John, the waiter, who never did such a thing before, did this time suffer the plate to tip, so that a little of that rare soup dripped into your lap—just enough to spoil those trousers, which is nothing to you, because you can buy a great many more trousers, but which little event is inharmonious with the fine porcelain dinner service, with the fragrant wines, the glittering glass, the beautiful guests, and the mood of mind suggested by all of these. There is, in fact, if you will pardon a free use of the vernacular, there is a grease-spot upon your remembrance of this dinner.

Or, in the same way, and with the same kind of mental result, you can easily imagine the meats a

little tough; a suspicion of smoke somewhere in the sauces; too much pepper, perhaps, or too little salt; or there might be the graver dissonance of claret not properly attuned, or a choice Rhenish below the average mark, or the spilling of some of that Arethusia Madeira, marvellous for its innumerable circumnavigations of the globe, and for being as dry as the conversation of the host. These things are not up to the high level of the dinner; for wherever Aurelia dines, all accessories should be as perfect in their kind as she, the principal, is in hers.

That reminds me of a possible dissonance worse than all. Suppose that soup had trickled down the unimaginable *berthe* of Aurelia's dress (since it might have done so), instead of wasting itself upon your trousers! Could even the irreproachable elegance of your manners have contemplated, unmoved, a grease-spot upon your remembrance of the peerless Aurelia?

You smile, of course, and remind me that that lady's manners are so perfect that, if she drank poison, she would wipe her mouth after it as gracefully as ever. How much more then, you say, in the case of such a slight *contretemps* as spotting her dress, would she appear totally unmoved.

So she would, undoubtedly. She would be, and look, as pure as ever; but, my young friend, her dress would not. Once, I dropped a pickled oyster in the lap of my Prue, who wore, on the occasion, her sea-green silk gown. I did not love my Prue the less; but there certainly was a very unhandsome spot upon her dress. And although I know my Prue to be spotless, yet, whenever I recall that day, I see her in a spotted gown, and I would prefer never to have been obliged to think of her in such a garment.

Can you not make the application to the case, very likely to happen, of some disfigurement of that exquisite toilette of Aurelia's? In going down-stairs, for instance, why should not heavy old Mr. Carbuncle, who is coming close behind with Mrs. Peony, both very eager for dinner, tread upon the hem of that

garment which my lips would grow pale to kiss? The august Aurelia, yielding to natural laws, would be drawn suddenly backward—a very undignified movement—and the dress would be dilapidated. There would be apologies, and smiles, and forgiveness, and pinning up the pieces, nor would there be the faintest feeling of awkwardness or vexation in Aurelia's mind. But to you, looking on, and, beneath all that pure show of waistcoat, cursing old Carbuncle's carelessness, this tearing of dresses and repair of the toilette is by no means a poetic and cheerful spectacle. Nay, the very impatience that it produces in your mind jars upon the harmony of the moment.

You will respond, with proper scorn, that you are not so absurdly fastidious as to heed the little necessary drawbacks of social meetings, and that you have not much regard for "the harmony of the occasion" (which phrase I fear you will repeat in a sneering tone). You will do very right in saying this; and it is a remark to which I shall give all the hospitality of my mind, and I do so because I heartily coincide in it. I hold a man to be very foolish who will not eat a good dinner because the table-cloth is not clean, or who cavils at the spots upon the sun. But still a man who does not apply his eye to a telescope or some kind of prepared medium, does not see those spots, while he has just as much light and heat as he who does.

So it is with me. I walk in the avenue, and eat all the delightful dinners without seeing the spots upon the table-cloth, and behold all the beautiful Aurelias without swearing at old Carbuncle. I am the guest who, for the small price of invisibility, drinks only the best wines, and talks only to the most agreeable people. That is something, I can tell you, for you might be asked to lead out old Mrs. Peony. My fancy slips in between you and Aurelia, sit you never so closely together. It not only hears what she says, but it perceives what she thinks and



feels. It lies like a bee in her flowery thoughts, sucking all their honey. If there are unhandsome or unfeeling guests at table, it will not see them. It knows only the good and fair. As I stroll in the fading light and observe the stately houses, my fancy believes the host equal to his house, and the courtesy of his wife more agreeable than her conservatory. It will not believe that the pictures on the wall and the statues in the corners shame the guests. It will not allow that they are less than noble. It hears them speak gently of error, and warmly of worth. It knows that they commend heroism and devotion, and reprobate insincerity. My fancy is convinced that the guests are not only feasted upon the choicest fruits of every land and season, but are refreshed by a consciousness of greater loveliness and grace in human character.

Now you, who actually go to the dinner, may not entirely agree with the view my fancy takes of that entertainment. Is it not, therefore, rather your loss? Or, to put it in another way, ought I to envy you the discovery that the guests *are* shamed by the statues and pictures;—yes, and by the spoons and forks also, if they should chance neither to be so genuine nor so useful as those instruments? And, worse than this, when your fancy wishes to enjoy the picture which mine forms of that feast, it cannot do so, because you have foolishly interpolated the fact between the dinner and your fancy.

Of course, by this time it is late twilight, and the spectacle I enjoyed is almost over. But not quite, for as I return slowly along the streets, the windows are open, and only a thin haze of lace or muslin separates me from the Paradise within.

I see the graceful cluster of girls hovering over the piano, and the quiet groups of the elders in easy chairs, around little tables. I cannot hear what is said, nor plainly see the faces. But some hoyden evening wind, more daring than I, abruptly parts the cloud to look in, and out comes a gush of light, music,



and fragrance, so that I shrink away into the dark, that I may not seem, even by chance, to have invaded that privacy.

Suddenly there is singing. It is Aurelia, who does not cope with the Italian *Prima Donna*, nor sing indifferently to-night, what was sung superbly last evening at the opera. She has a strange, low, sweet voice, as if she only sang in the twilight. It is the ballad of "Allan Percy" that she sings. There is no dainty applause of kid gloves, when it is ended, but silence follows the singing, like a tear.

Then you, my young friend, ascend into the drawing-room, and, after a little graceful gossip, retire; or you wait, possibly, to hand Aurelia into her carriage, and to arrange a waltz for to-morrow evening. She smiles, you bow, and it is over. But it is not yet over with me. My fancy still follows her, and, like a prophetic dream, rehearses her destiny. For, as the carriage rolls away into the darkness and I return homewards, how can my fancy help rolling away also, into the dim future, watching her go down the years?

Upon my way home I see her in a thousand new situations. My fancy says to me, "The beauty of this beautiful woman is heaven's stamp upon virtue. She will be equal to every chance that shall befall her, and she is so radiant and charming in the circle of prosperity, only because she has that irresistible simplicity and fidelity of character, which can also pluck the sting from adversity. Do you not see, you wan old book-keeper in faded cravat, that in a poor man's house this superb Aurelia would be more stately than sculpture, more beautiful than painting, and more graceful than the famous vases? Would her husband regret the opera if she sang 'Allan Percy' to him in the twilight? Would he not feel richer than the Poets, when his eyes rose from their jewelled pages, to fall again dazzled by the splendour of his wife's beauty?"

At this point in my reflections I sometimes run,

rather violently, against a lamp-post, and then proceed along the street more sedately.

It is yet early when I reach home, where my Prue awaits me. The children are asleep, and the trousers mended. The admirable woman is patient of my idiosyncrasies, and asks me if I have had a pleasant walk, and if there were many fine dinners to-day, as if I had been expected at a dozen tables. She even asks me if I have seen the beautiful Aurelia (for there is always some Aurelia,) and inquires what dress she wore. I respond, and dilate upon what I have seen. Prue listens, as the children listen to her fairy tales. We discuss the little stories that penetrate our retirement, of the great people who actually dine out. Prue, with fine womanly instinct, declares it is a shame that Aurelia should smile for a moment upon ——, yes, even upon you, my friend of the irreproachable manners!

"I know him," says my simple Prue; "I have watched his cold courtesy, his insincere devotion. I have seen him acting in the boxes at the opera, much more adroitly than the singers upon the stage. I have read his determination to marry Aurelia; and I shall not be surprised," concludes my tender wife, sadly, "if he wins her at last, by tiring her out, or, by secluding her by his constant devotion from the homage of other men, convinces her that she had better marry him, since it is so dismal to live on unmarried."

And so, my friend, at the moment when the bouquet you ordered is arriving at Aurelia's house, and she is sitting before the glass while her maid arranges the last flower in her hair, my darling Prue, whom you will never hear of, is shedding warm tears over your probable union, and I am sitting by, adjusting my cravat and incontinently clearing my throat.

It is rather a ridiculous business, I allow; yet you will smile at it tenderly, rather than scornfully, if you remember that it shows how closely linked we human

creatures are, without knowing it, and that more hearts than we dream of enjoy our happiness and share our sorrow.

Thus, I dine at great tables uninvited, and, unknown, converse with the famous beauties. If Aurelia is at last engaged, (but who is worthy?) she will, with even greater care, arrange that wondrous toilette, will teach that lace a fall more alluring, those gems a sweeter light. But even then, as she rolls to dinner in her carriage, glad that she is fair, not for her own sake nor for the world's, but for that of a single youth (who, I hope, has not been smoking at the club all the morning), I, sauntering upon the sidewalk, see her pass, I pay homage to her beauty, and her lover can do no more; and if, perchance, my garments—which must seem quaint to her, with their shining knees and carefully brushed elbows; my white cravat, careless, yet prim; my meditative movement, as I put my stick under my arm to pare an apple, and not, I hope, this time to fall into the street,—should remind her, in her spring of youth, and beauty, and love, that there are age, and care, and poverty, also; then, perhaps, the good fortune of the meeting is not wholly mine.

For, O beautiful Aurelia, two of these things, at least, must come even to you. There will be a time when you will no longer go out to dinner, or only very quietly, in the family. I shall be gone then: but other old book-keepers in white cravats will inherit my tastes, and saunter, on summer afternoons, to see what I loved to see.

They will not pause, I fear, in buying apples, to look at the old lady in venerable cap, who is rolling by in the carriage. They will worship another Aurelia. You will not wear diamonds or opals any more, only one pearl upon your blue-veined finger—your engagement ring. Grave clergymen and antiquated beaux will hand you down to dinner, and the group of polished youth, who gather around the yet unborn Aurelia of that day, will look at you, sitting

quietly upon the sofa, and say, softly, "She must have been very handsome in her time."

All this must be : for consider how few years since it was your grandmother who was the belle, by whose side the handsome young men longed to sit and pass expressive mottoes. Your grandmother was the Aurelia of a half-century ago, although you cannot fancy her young. She is indissolubly associated in your mind with caps and dark dresses. You can believe Mary Queen of Scots, or Nell Gwyn or Cleopatra, to have been young and blooming, although they belong to old and dead centuries, but not your grandmother. Think of those who shall believe the same of you—you, who to-day are the very flower of youth.

Might I plead with you, Aurelia—I, who would be too happy to receive one of those graciously beaming bows that I see you bestow upon young men, in passing,—I would ask you to bear that thought with you, always, not to sadden your sunny smile, but to give it a more subtle grace. Wear in your summer garland this little leaf of rue. It will not be the skull at the feast, it will rather be the tender thoughtfulness in the face of the young Madonna.

For the years pass like summer clouds, Aurelia, and the children of yesterday are the wives and mothers of to-day. Even I do sometimes discover the mild eyes of my Prue fixed pensively upon my face, as if searching for the bloom which she remembers there in the days, long ago, when we were young. She will never see it there again, any more than the flowers she held in her hand, in our old spring rambles. Yet the tear that slowly gathers as she gazes, is not grief that the bloom has faded from my cheek, but the sweet consciousness that it can never fade from my heart; and as her eyes fall upon her work again, or the children climb her lap to hear the old fairy tales they already know by heart, my wife Prue is dearer to me than the sweetheart of those days long ago.

## MY CHATEAUX

“In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree.”

COLERIDGE.

I AM the owner of great estates. Many of them lie in the West; but the greater part are in Spain. You may see my western possessions any evening at sunset when their spires and battlements flash against the horizon.

It gives me a feeling of pardonable importance, as a proprietor, that they are visible, to my eyes at least, from any part of the world in which I chance to be. In my long voyage around the Cape of Good Hope to India (the only voyage I ever made, when I was a boy and a supercargo), if I fell home-sick, or sank into a reverie of all the pleasant homes I had left behind, I had but to wait until sunset, and then looking toward the west, I beheld my clustering pinnacles and towers brightly burnished as if to salute and welcome me.

So, in the city, if I get vexed and wearied, and cannot find my wonted solace in sallying forth at dinner-time to contemplate the gay world of youth and beauty hurrying to the congress of fashion,—or if I observe that years are deepening their tracks around the eyes of my wife, Prue, I go quietly up to the housetop, toward evening, and refresh myself with a distant prospect of my estates. It is as dear to me as that of Eton to the poet Gray; and, if I sometimes wonder at such moments whether I shall find those realms as fair as they appear, I am suddenly reminded that the night air may be noxious, and descending, I enter the little parlour where Prue sits stitching, and surprise that precious woman by exclaiming with the poet's pensive enthusiasm:

“Thought would destroy their Paradise,  
No more ;—where ignorance is bliss,  
’Tis folly to be wise.”

Columbus, also, had possessions in the West ; and as I read aloud the romantic story of his life, my voice quivers when I come to the point in which it is related that sweet odours of the land mingled with the sea-air, as the admiral’s fleet approached the shores ; that tropical birds flew out and fluttered around the ships, glittering in the sun, the gorgeous promises of the new country ; that boughs, perhaps with blossoms not all decayed, floated out to welcome the strange wood from which the craft were hollowed. Then I cannot restrain myself. I think of the gorgeous visions I have seen before I have even undertaken the journey to the West, and I cry aloud to Prue :

“What sun-bright birds, and gorgeous blossoms, and celestial odours will float out to us, my Prue, as we approach our western possessions ! ”

The placid Prue raises her eyes to mine with a reproof so delicate that it could not be trusted to words ; and, after a moment, she resumes her knitting and I proceed.

These are my western estates, but my finest castles are in Spain. It is a country famously romantic, and my castles are all of perfect proportions, and appropriately set in the most picturesque situations. I have never been to Spain myself, but I have naturally conversed much with travellers to that country ; although, I must allow, without deriving from them much substantial information about my property there. The wisest of them told me that there were more holders of real estate in Spain than in any other region he had ever heard of, and they are all great proprietors. Every one of them possesses a multitude of the stateliest castles. From conversation with them you easily gather that each one considers his own castles much the largest and in the loveliest positions. And, after I had heard this said, I verified it,

by discovering that all my immediate neighbours in the city were great Spanish proprietors.

One day as I raised my head from entering some long and tedious accounts in my books, and began to reflect that the quarter was expiring, and that I must begin to prepare the balance-sheet, I observed my subordinate, in office but not in years, (for poor old Titbottom will never see sixty again!) leaning on his hand, and much abstracted.

"Are you not well, Titbottom!" asked I.

"Perfectly, but I was just building a castle in Spain," said he.

I looked at his rusty coat, his faded hands, his sad eye, and white hair, for a moment, in great surprise, and then inquired:

"Is it possible that you own property there too?"

He shook his head silently; and still leaning on his hand, and with an expression in his eye, as if he were looking upon the most fertile estate of Andalusia, he went on making his plans; laying out his gardens, I suppose, building terraces for the vines, determining a library with a southern exposure, and resolving which should be the tapestried chamber.

"What a singular whim," thought I, as I watched Titbottom and filled up a cheque for four hundred dollars, my quarterly salary, "that a man who owns castles in Spain should be deputy book-keeper at nine hundred dollars a year!"

When I went home I ate my dinner silently, and afterward sat for a long time upon the roof of the house, looking at my western property, and thinking of Titbottom.

It is remarkable that none of the proprietors have ever been to Spain to take possession and report to the rest of us the state of our property there. I, of course, cannot go, I am too much engaged. So is Titbottom. And I find it is the case with all the proprietors. We have so much to detain us at home that we cannot get away. But it is always so with rich



men. Prue sighed once as she sat at the window and saw Bourne, the millionaire, the President of innumerable companies, and manager and director of all the charitable societies in town, going by with wrinkled brow and hurried step. I asked her why she sighed.

"Because I was remembering that my mother used to tell me not to desire great riches, for they occasioned great cares," said she.

"They do indeed," answered I, with emphasis, remembering Titbottom, and the impossibility of looking after my Spanish estates.

Prue turned and looked at me with mild surprise; but I saw that her mind had gone down the street with Bourne. I could never discover if he held much Spanish stock. But I think he does. All the Spanish proprietors have a certain expression. Bourne has it to a remarkable degree. It is a kind of look, as if, in fact, a man's mind were in Spain. Bourne was an old lover of Prue's, and he is not married, which is strange for a man in his position.

It is not easy for me to say how I know so much, as I certainly do, about my castles in Spain. The sun always shines upon them. They stand lofty and fair in a luminous, golden atmosphere, a little hazy and dreamy, perhaps, like the Indian summer, but in which no gales blow and there are no tempests. All the sublime mountains, and beautiful valleys, and soft landscape, that I have not yet seen, are to be found in the grounds. They command a noble view of the Alps; so fine, indeed, that I should be quite content with the prospect of them from the highest tower of my castle, and not care to go to Switzerland.

The neighbouring ruins, too, are as picturesque as those of Italy, and my desire of standing in the Coliseum, and of seeing the shattered arches of the Aqueducts stretching along the Campagna and melting into the Alban Mount, is entirely quenched. The rich gloom of my orange groves is gilded by fruit as



brilliant of complexion and exquisite of flavour as any that ever dark-eyed Sorrento girls, looking over the high plastered walls of southern Italy, hand to the youthful travellers, climbing on donkeys up the narrow lane beneath.

The Nile flows through my grounds. The Desert lies upon their edge, and Damascus stands in my garden. I am given to understand, also, that the Parthenon has been removed to my Spanish possessions. The Golden-Horn is my fish-preserve; my flocks of golden fleece are pastured on the plain of Marathon, and the honey of Hymettus is distilled from the flowers that grow in the vale of Enna—all in my Spanish domains.

From the windows of those castles look the beautiful women whom I have never seen, whose portraits the poets have painted. They wait for me there, and chiefly the fair-haired child, lost to my eyes so long ago, now bloomed into an impossible beauty. The lights that never shone, glance at evening in the vaulted halls, upon banquets that were never spread. The bands I have never collected, play all night long, and enchant the brilliant company, that was never assembled, into silence.

In the long summer mornings the children that I never had, play in the gardens that I never planted. I hear their sweet voices sounding low and far away, calling, "Father! father!" I see the lost fair-haired girl, grown now into a woman, descending the stately stairs of my castle in Spain, stepping out upon the lawn, and playing with those children. They bound away together down the garden; but those voices linger, this time airily calling, "Mother! mother!"

But there is a stranger magic than this in my Spanish estates. The lawny slopes on which, when a child, I played, in my father's old country place, which was sold when he failed, are all there, and not a flower faded, nor a blade of grass sere. The green leaves are not fallen from the spring woods of half a

century ago, and a gorgeous autumn has blazed undimmed for fifty years, among the trees I remember.

Chestnuts are not especially sweet to my palate now, but those with which I used to prick my fingers when gathering them in New Hampshire woods are exquisite as ever to my taste, when I think of eating them in Spain. I never ride horseback now at home; but in Spain, when I think of it, I bound over all the fences in the country, barebacked upon the wildest horses. Sermons I am apt to find a little soporific in this country; but in Spain I should listen as reverently as ever, for proprietors must set a good example on their estates.

Plays are insufferable to me here—Prue and I never go. Prue, indeed, is not quite sure it is moral; but the theatres in my Spanish castles are of a prodigious splendour, and when I think of going there, Prue sits in a front box with me—a kind of royal box—the good woman, attired in such wise as I have never seen her here, while I wear my white waistcoat, which in Spain has no appearance of mending, but dazzles with immortal newness, and is a miraculous fit.

Yes, and in those castles in Spain, Prue is not the placid, breeches-patching helpmate, with whom you are acquainted, but her face has a bloom which we both remember, and her movement a grace which my Spanish swans emulate, and her voice a music sweeter than those that orchestras discourse. She is always there what she seemed to me when I fell in love with her, many and many years ago. The neighbours called her then a nice, capable girl; and certainly she did knit and darn with a zeal and success to which my feet and my legs have testified for nearly half a century. But she could spin a finer web than ever came from cotton, and in its subtle meshes my heart was entangled, and there has reposed softly and happily ever since. The neighbours declared she could make pudding and cake better than any girl of her age; but stale bread from Prue's hand was ambrosia to my palate.

"She who makes everything well, even to making neighbours speak well of her, will surely make a good wife," said I to myself when I knew her; and the echo of a half century answers, "a good wife."

So, when I meditate my Spanish castles, I see Prue in them as my heart saw her standing by her father's door. "Age cannot wither her." There is a magic in the Spanish air that paralyzes Time. He glides by, unnoticed and unnoticed. I greatly admire the Alps, which I see so distinctly from my Spanish windows; I delight in the taste of the southern fruit that ripens upon my terraces; I enjoy the pensive shade of the Italian ruins in my gardens; I like to shoot crocodiles, and talk with the Sphinx upon the shores of the Nile, flowing through my domain; I am glad to drink sherbet in Damascus, and fleece my flocks on the plains of Marathon; but I would resign all these for ever rather than part with that Spanish portrait of Prue for a day. Nay, have I not resigned them all for ever, to live with that portrait's changing original?

I have often wondered how I should reach my castles. The desire of going comes over me very strongly sometimes, and I endeavour to see how I can arrange my affairs, so as to get away. To tell the truth, I am not quite sure of the route,—I mean, to that particular part of Spain in which my estates lie. I have inquired very particularly, but nobody seems to know precisely. One morning I met young Aspen, trembling with excitement.

"What's the matter?" asked I with interest, for I knew that he held a great deal of Spanish stock.

"Oh!" said he, "I'm going out to take possession. I have found the way to my castles in Spain."

"Dear me!" I answered, with the blood streaming into my face; and, heedless of Prue, pulling my glove until it ripped—"what is it?"

"The direct route is through California," answered he.

"But then you have the sea to cross afterward," said I, remembering the map.

"Not at all," answered Aspen, "the road runs along the shore of the Sacramento River."

He darted away from me, and I did not meet him again. I was very curious to know if he arrived safely in Spain, and was expecting every day to hear news from him of my property there, when, one evening, I bought an extra, full of California news, and the first thing upon which my eye fell was this: "Died, in San Francisco, Edward Aspen, Esq., aged 35." There is a large body of the Spanish stockholders who believe with Aspen, and sail for California every week. I have not yet heard of their arrival out at their castles, but I suppose they are so busy with their own affairs there, that they have no time to write to the rest of us about the condition of our property.

There was my wife's cousin, too, Jonathan Bud, who is a good, honest, youth from the country, and, after a few weeks' absence, he burst into the office one day, just as I was balancing my books, and whispered to me, eagerly:

"I've found my castle in Spain."

I put the blotting-paper in the leaf deliberately, for I was wiser now than when Aspen had excited me, and looked at my wife's cousin, Jonathan Bud, inquiringly.

"Polly Bacon," whispered he, winking.

I continued the interrogative glance.

"She's going to marry me, and she'll show me the way to Spain," said Jonathan Bud, hilariously.

"She'll make you walk Spanish, Jonathan Bud," said I.

And so she does. He makes no more hilarious remarks. He never bursts into a room. He does not ask us to dinner. He says that Mrs. Bud does not like smoking. Mrs. Bud has nerves and babies. She has a way of saying, "Mr. Bud!" which destroys conversation, and casts a gloom upon society.

It occurred to me that Bourne, the millionaire, must have ascertained the safest and most expedi-

tious route to Spain; so I stole a few minutes one afternoon, and went into his office. He was sitting at his desk, writing rapidly, and surrounded by files of papers and patterns, specimens, boxes, everything that covers the tables of a great merchant. In the outer rooms clerks were writing. Upon high shelves over their heads, were huge chests, covered with dust, dingy with age, many of them, and all marked with the name of the firm, in large black letters—"Bourne & Dye." They were all numbered also with the proper year; some of them with a single capital B, and dates extending back into the last century, when old Bourne made the great fortune, before he went into partnership with Dye. Everything was indicative of immense and increasing prosperity.

There were several gentlemen in waiting to converse with Bourne (we all call him so, familiarly, down town), and I waited until they went out. But others came in. There was no pause in the rush. All kinds of inquiries were made and answered. At length I stepped up.

"A moment, please, Mr. Bourne."

He looked up hastily, wished me good morning, which he had done to none of the others, and which courtesy I attributed to Spanish sympathy.

"What is it, sir?" he asked, blandly, but with wrinkled brow.

"Mr. Bourne, have you any castles in Spain?" said I, without preface.

He looked at me for a few moments without speaking, and without seeming to see me. His brow gradually smoothed, and his eyes, apparently looking into the street, were really, I have no doubt, feasting upon the Spanish landscape.

"Too many, too many," said he at length, musingly, shaking his head, and without addressing me.

I suppose he felt himself too much extended—as we say in Wall Street. He feared, I thought, that he

had too much impracticable property elsewhere, to own so much in Spain; so I asked,

"Will you tell me what you consider the shortest and safest route thither, Mr. Bourne? for, of course, a man who drives such an immense trade with all parts of the world, will know all that I have come to inquire."

"My dear sir," answered he wearily, "I have been trying all my life to discover it; but none of my ships have ever been there—none of my captains have any report to make. They bring me, as they brought my father, gold dust from Guinea; ivory, pearls, and precious stones, from every part of the earth; but not a fruit, not a solitary flower, from one of my castles in Spain. I have sent clerks, agents, and travellers of all kinds, philosophers, pleasure-hunters, and invalids, in all sorts of ships, to all sorts of places, but none of them ever saw or heard of my castles, except one young poet, and he died in a mad-house."

"Mr. Bourne, will you take five thousand at ninety-seven?" hastily demanded a man, whom, as he entered, I recognized as a broker. "We'll make a splendid thing of it."

Bourne nodded assent, and the broker disappeared.

"Happy man!" muttered the merchant, as the broker went out; "he has no castles in Spain."

"I am sorry to have troubled you, Mr. Bourne," said I, retiring.

"I am glad you came," returned he; "but I assure you, had I known the route you hoped to ascertain from me, I should have sailed years and years ago. People sail for the North-west Passage, which is nothing when you have found it. Why don't the English Admiralty fit out expeditions to discover all our castles in Spain?"

He sat lost in thought.

"It's nearly post-time, sir," said the clerk.

Mr. Bourne did not heed him. He was still musing; and I turned to go, wishing him good morn-

ing. When I had nearly reached the door, he called me back, saying, as if continuing his remarks—

“It is strange that you, of all men, should come to ask me this question. If I envy any man, it is you, for I sincerely assure you that I supposed you lived altogether upon your Spanish estates. I once thought I knew the way to mine. I gave directions for furnishing them, and ordered bridal bouquets, which were never used, but I suppose they are there still.”

He paused a moment, then said slowly—“How is your wife?”

I told him that Prue was well—that she was always remarkably well. Mr. Bourne shook me warmly by the hand.

“Thank you,” said he. “Good morning.”

I knew why he thanked me; I knew why he thought that I lived altogether upon my Spanish estates; I knew a little bit about those bridal bouquets. Mr. Bourne, the millionaire, was an old lover of Prue’s. There is something very odd about these Spanish castles. When I think of them, I somehow see the fair-haired girl whom I knew when I was not out of short jackets. When Bourne meditates them, he sees Prue and me quietly at home in their best chambers. It is a very singular thing that my wife should live in another’s man’s castle in Spain.

At length I resolved to ask Titbottom if he had ever heard of the best route to our estates. He said that he owned castles, and sometimes there was an expression in his face, as if he saw them. I hope he did. I should long ago have asked him if he had ever observed the turrets of my possessions in the West, without alluding to Spain, if I had not feared he would suppose I was mocking his poverty. I hope his poverty has not turned his head, for he is very forlorn.

One Sunday I went with him a few miles into the country. It was a soft, bright day, the fields and hills lay turned to the sky, as if every leaf and blade of grass were nerves, bared to the touch of the sun. I



almost felt the ground warm under my feet. The meadows waved and glittered, the lights and shadows were exquisite, and the distant hills seemed only to remove the horizon farther away. As we strolled along, picking wild flowers, for it was in summer, I was thinking what a fine day it was for a trip to Spain, when Titbottom suddenly exclaimed :

"Thank God ! I own this landscape."

"You," returned I.

"Certainly," said he.

"Why," I answered, "I thought this was part of Bourne's property?"

Titbottom smiled.

"Does Bourne own the sun and sky? Does Bourne own that sailing shadow yonder? Does Bourne own the golden lustre of the grain, or the motion of the wood, or those ghosts of hills, that glide pallid along the horizon? Bourne owns the dirt and fences; I own the beauty that makes the landscape, or otherwise how could I own castles in Spain?"

That was very true. I respected Titbottom more than ever.

"Do you know," said he, after a long pause, "that I fancy my castles lie just beyond those distant hills. At all events, I can see them distinctly from their summits."

He smiled quietly as he spoke, and it was then I asked :

"But, Titbottom, have you never discovered the way to them?"

"Dear me ! yes," answered he, "I know the way well enough ; but it would do no good to follow it. I should give out before I arrived. It is a long and difficult journey for a man of my years and habits—and income," he added slowly.

As he spoke he seated himself upon the ground ; and while he pulled long blades of grass, and, putting them between his thumbs, whistled shrilly, he said :

"I have never known but two men who reached their estates in Spain."



"Indeed!" said I, "how did they go?"

"One went over the side of a ship, and the other out of a third story window," said Titbottom, fitting a broad blade between his thumbs and blowing a demoniacal blast.

"And I know one proprietor who resides upon his estates constantly," continued he.

"Who is that?"

"Our old friend, Slug, whom you may see any day at the asylum, just coming in from the hunt, or going to call upon his friend the Grand Lama, or dressing for the wedding of the Man in the Moon, or receiving an ambassador from Timbuctoo. Whenever I go to see him, Slug insists that I am the Pope, disguised as a journeyman carpenter, and he entertains me in the most distinguished manner. He always insists upon kissing my foot, and I bestow upon him, kneeling, the apostolic benediction. This is the only Spanish proprietor in possession, with whom I am acquainted."

And, so saying, Titbottom lay back upon the ground, and making a spy-glass of his hand, surveyed the landscape through it. This was a marvellous book-keeper of more than sixty!

"I know another man who lived in his Spanish castle for two months, and then was tumbled out head first. That was young Stunning who married old Buhl's daughter. She was all smiles, and mamma was all sugar, and Stunning was all bliss, for two months. He carried his head in the clouds, and felicity absolutely foamed at his eyes. He was drowned in love; seeing, as usual, not what really was, but what he fancied. He lived so exclusively in his castle, that he forgot the office down town, and one morning there came a fall, and Stunning was smashed."

Titbottom arose, and stooping over, contemplated the landscape, with his head down between his legs.

"It's quite a new effect, so," said the nimble book-keeper.

"Well," said I, "Stunning failed?"

"Oh yes, smashed all up, and the castle in Spain came down about his ears with a tremendous crash. The family sugar was all dissolved into the original cane in a moment. Fairy-times are over, are they? Heigh-ho! the falling stones of Stunning's castle have left their marks all over his face. I call them his Spanish scars."

"But, my dear Titbottom," said I, "what is the matter with you this morning, your usual sedateness is quite gone?"

"It's only the exhilarating air of Spain," he answered. "My castles are so beautiful that I can never think of them, nor speak of them, without excitement; when I was younger I desired to reach them even more ardently than now, because I heard that the philosopher's stone was in the vault of one of them."

"Indeed," said I, yielding to sympathy, "and I have good reason to believe that the fountain of eternal youth flows through the garden of one of mine. Do you know whether there are any children upon your grounds?"

"The children of Alice call Bartrum father!" replied Titbottom, solemnly, and in a low voice, as he folded his faded hands before him, and stood erect, looking wistfully over the landscape. The light wind played with his thin white hair, and his sober, black suit was almost sombre in the sunshine. The half bitter expression, which I had remarked upon his face during part of our conversation, had passed away, and the old sadness had returned to his eye. He stood, in the pleasant morning, the very image of a great proprietor of castles in Spain.

"There is wonderful music there," he said: "sometimes I awake at night, and hear it. It is full of the sweetness of youth, and love, and a new world. I lie and listen, and I seem to arrive at the great gates of my estates. They swing open upon noiseless hinges, and the tropic of my dreams receives me."

Up the broad steps, whose marble pavement mingled light and shadow print with shifting mosaic, beneath the boughs of lustrous oleanders, and palms, and trees of unimaginable fragrance, I pass into the vestibule, warm with summer odours, and into the presence-chamber beyond, where my wife awaits me. But castle, and wife, and odorous woods, and pictures, and statues, and all the bright substance of my household, seem to reel and glimmer in the splendour, as the music fails.

“But when it swells again, I clasp the wife to my heart, and we move on with a fair society, beautiful women, noble men, before whom the tropical luxuriance of that world bends and bows in homage; and, through endless days and nights of eternal summer, the stately revel of our life proceeds. Then, suddenly, the music stops. I hear my watch ticking under the pillow. I see dimly the outline of my little upper room. Then I fall asleep, and in the morning some one of the boarders at the breakfast-table says :

““ Did you hear the serenade last night, Mr. Titbottom? ” ”

I doubted no longer that Titbottom was a very extensive proprietor. The truth is, that he was so constantly engaged in planning and arranging his castles, that he conversed very little at the office, and I had misinterpreted his silence. As we walked homeward, that day, he was more than ever tender and gentle. “We must all have something to do in this world,” said he, “and I, who have so much leisure—for you know I have no wife nor children to work for—know not what I should do, if I had not my castles in Spain to look after.”

When I reached home, my darling Prue was sitting in the small parlour, reading. I felt a little guilty for having been so long away, and upon my only holiday, too. So I began to say that Titbottom invited me to go to walk, and that I had no idea we had gone so far, and that——

“Don’t excuse yourself,” said Prue, smiling as

she laid down her book; "I am glad you have enjoyed yourself. You ought to go out sometimes, and breathe the fresh air, and run about the fields, which I am not strong enough to do. Why did you not bring home Mr. Titbottom to tea? He is so lonely, and looks so sad. I am sure he has very little comfort in this life," said my thoughtful Prue, as she called Jane to set the tea-table.

"But he has a good deal of comfort in Spain, Prue," answered I.

"When was Mr. Titbottom in Spain?" inquired my wife.

"Why, he is there more than half the time," I replied.

Prue looked quietly at me and smiled. "I see it has done you good to breathe the country air," said she. "Jane, get some of the blackberry jam, and call Adoniram and the children."

So we went in to tea. We eat in the back parlour, for our little house and limited means do not allow us to have things upon the Spanish scale. It is better than a sermon to hear my wife Prue talk to the children; and when she speaks to me it seems sweeter than psalm singing; at least, such as we have in our church. I am very happy.

Yet I dream my dreams, and attend to my castles in Spain. I have so much property there, that I could not, in conscience, neglect it. All the years of my youth, and the hopes of my manhood, are stored away, like precious stones, in the vaults; and I know that I shall find everything convenient, elegant, and beautiful, when I come into possession.

As the years go by, I am not conscious that my interest diminishes. If I see that age is subtly sifting his snow in the dark hair of my Prue, I smile, contented, for her hair, dark and heavy as when I first saw it, is all carefully treasured in my castles in Spain. If I feel her arm more heavily leaning upon mine, as we walk around the squares, I press it closely to my side, for I know that the easy grace of

her youth's motion will be restored by the elixir of that Spanish air. If her voice sometimes falls less clearly from her lips, it is no less sweet to me, for the music of her voice's prime fills, freshly as ever, those Spanish halls. If the light I love fades a little from her eyes, I know that the glances she gave me, in our youth, are the eternal sunshine of my castles in Spain.

I defy time and change. Each year laid upon our heads is a hand of blessing. I have no doubt that I shall find the shortest route to my possessions as soon as need be. Perhaps, when Adoniram is married, we shall all go out to one of my castles to pass the honeymoon.

Ah! if the true history of Spain could be written, what a book were there! The most purely romantic ruin in the world is the Alhambra. But of the Spanish castles, more spacious and splendid than any possible Alhambra, and for ever unruined, no towers are visible, no pictures have been painted, and only a few ecstatic songs have been sung. The pleasure-dome of Kubla Khan, which Coleridge saw in Xanadu (a province with which I am not familiar), and a fine Castle of Indolence belonging to Thomson, and the Palace of art which Tennyson built as a "lordly pleasure-house" for his soul, are among the best statistical accounts of those Spanish estates. Turner, too, has done for them much the same service that Owen Jones has done for the Alhambra. In the vignette to Moore's *Epicurean* you will find represented one of the most extensive castles in Spain; and there are several exquisite studies from others, by the same artists, published in Roger's *Italy*.

But I confess I do not recognize any of these as mine, and that fact makes me prouder of my own castles, for, if there be such boundless variety of magnificence in their aspect and exterior, imagine the life that is led there, a life not unworthy such a setting.

If Adoniram should be married within a reasonable

time, and we should make up that little family party to go out, I have considered already what society I should ask to meet the bride. Jephthah's daughter and the Chevalier Bayard, I should say—and fair Rosamond with Dean Swift—King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba would come over, I think, from his famous castle—Shakespeare and his friend the Marquis of Southampton might come in a galley with Cleopatra; and, if any guest were offended by her presence, he should devote himself to the Fair One with Golden Locks. Mephistophiles is not personally disagreeable, and is exceedingly well-bred in society, I am told; and he should come *tête-à-tête* with Mrs. Rawdon Crawley. Spenser should escort his Faerie Queen, who would preside at the tea-table.

Mr. Samuel Weller I should ask as Lord of Misrule, and Dr. Johnson as the Abbot of Unreason. I would suggest to Major Dobbin to accompany Mrs. Fry; Alcibiades would bring Homer and Plato in his purple-sailed galley; and I would have Aspasia, Ninon de l'Enclos, and Mrs. Battle, to make up a table of whist with Queen Elizabeth. I shall order a seat placed in the oratory for Lady Jane Grey and Joan of Arc. I shall invite General Washington to bring some of the choicest cigars from his plantation for Sir Walter Raleigh; and Chaucer, Browning, and Walter Savage Landor, should talk with Goethe, who is to bring Tasso on one arm and Iphigenia on the other.

Dante and Mr. Carlyle would prefer, I suppose, to go down into the dark vaults under the castle. The Man in the Moon, the Old Harry, and William of the Wisp would be valuable additions, and the Laureate Tennyson might compose an official ode upon the occasion: or I would ask "They" to say all about it.

Of course there are many other guests whose names I do not at the moment recall. But I should invite, first of all, Miles Coverdale, who knows every-

thing about these places and this society, for he was at Blithedale, and he has described "a select party" which he attended at a castle in the air.

Prue has not yet looked over the list. In fact I am not quite sure that she knows my intention. For I wish to surprise her, and I think it would be generous to ask Bourne to lead her out in the bridal quadrille. I think that I shall try the first waltz with the girl I sometimes seem to see in my fairest castle, but whom I very vaguely remember. Titbottom will come with old Burton and Jaques. But I have not prepared half my invitations. Do you not guess it, seeing that I did not name, first of all, Elia, who assisted at the "Rejoicings upon the new year's coming of age"?

And yet, if Adoniram should never marry?—or if we could not get to Spain?—or if the company would not come?

What then? Shall I betray a secret? I have already entertained this party in my humble little parlour at home; and Prue presided as serenely as Semiramis over her court. Have I not said that I defy time, and shall space hope to daunt me? I keep books by day, but by night books keep me. They leave me to dreams and reveries. Shall I confess, that sometimes when I have been sitting, reading to my Prue, Cymbeline, perhaps, or a Canterbury tale, I have seemed to see clearly before me the broad highway to my castles in Spain; and as she looked up from her work, and smiled in sympathy, I have even fancied that I was already there.



## SEA FROM SHORE

“Come unto these yellow sands.”

*The Tempest.*

“Argosies of magic sails,

Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales.”

TENNYSON.

IN the month of June, Prue and I like to walk upon the Battery toward sunset, and watch the steamers, crowded with passengers, bound for the pleasant places along the coast where people pass the hot months. Sea-side lodgings are not very comfortable, I am told; but who would not be a little pinched in his chamber, if his windows looked upon the sea?

In such praises of the ocean do I indulge at such times, and so respectfully do I regard the sailors who may chance to pass, that Prue often says, with her shrewd smiles, that my mind is a kind of Greenwich Hospital, full of abortive marine hopes and wishes, broken-legged intentions, blind regrets, and desires, whose hands have been shot away in some hard battle of experience, so that they cannot grasp the results towards which they reach.

She is right, as usual. Such hopes and intentions do lie, ruined and hopeless now, strewn about the placid contentment of my mental life, as the old pensioners sit about the grounds at Greenwich, maimed and musing in the quiet morning sunshine. Many a one among them thinks what a Nelson he would have been if both his legs had not been prematurely carried away; or in what a Trafalgar of triumph he would have ended, if, unfortunately, he had not happened to have been blown blind by the explosion of that unlucky magazine.

So I dream, sometimes, of a straight scarlet collar, stiff with gold lace, around my neck, instead of this limp white cravat; and I have even brandished my



quill at the office so cutlass-wise, that Titbottom has paused in his additions and looked at me as if he doubted whether I should come out quite square in my petty cash. Yet he understands it. Titbottom was born in Nantucket.

That is the secret of my fondness for the sea; I was born by it. Not more surely do Savoyards pine for the mountains, or Cockneys for the sound of Bow bells, than those who are born within sight and sound of the ocean to return to it and renew their fealty. In dreams the children of the sea hear its voice.

I have read in some book of travels that certain tribes of Arabs have no name for the ocean, and that when they came to the shore for the first time, they asked with eager sadness, as if penetrated by the conviction of a superior beauty, "what is that desert of water more beautiful than the land?" And in the translations of German stories which Adoniram and the other children read, and into which I occasionally look in the evening when they are gone to bed—for I like to know what interests my children—I find that the Germans, who do not live near the sea, love the fairy lore of water, and tell the sweet stories of Undine and Melusina, as if they had especial charm for them, because their country is inland.

We who know the sea have less fairy feeling about it, but our realities are romance. My earliest remembrances are of a long range of old, half dilapidated stores; red brick stores with steep wooden roofs, and stone window-frames and door-frames, which stood upon docks built as if for immense trade with all quarters of the globe.

Generally there were only a few sloops moored to the tremendous posts, which I fancied could easily hold fast a Spanish Armada in a tropical hurricane. But sometimes a great ship, an East Indiaman, with rusty, seamed, blistered sides, and dingy sails, came slowly moving up the harbour, with an air of indolent

self-importance and consciousness of superiority, which inspired me with profound respect. If the ship had ever chanced to run down a row-boat, or a sloop, or any specimen of smaller craft, I should only have wondered at the temerity of any floating thing in crossing the path of such supreme majesty. The ship was leisurely chained and cabled to the old dock, and then came the disembowelling.

How the stately monster had been fattening upon foreign spoils! How it had gorged itself (such galleons did never seem to me of the feminine gender) with the luscious treasures of the tropics! It had lain its lazy length along the shores of China, and sucked in whole flowery harvests of tea. The Brazilian sun flashed through the strong wicker prisons, bursting with bananas and nectarean fruits that eschew the temperate zone. Steams of camphor, of sandal wood, arose from the hold. Sailors chanting cabalistic strains, that had to my ear a shrill and monotonous pathos, like the uniform rising and falling of an autumn wind, turned cranks that lifted the bales, and boxes, and crates, and swung them ashore.

But to my mind, the spell of their singing raised the fragrant freight, and not the crank. Madagascar and Ceylon appeared at the mystic bidding of the song. The placid sunshine of the docks was perfumed with India. The universal calm of southern seas poured from the bosom of the ship over the quiet, decaying old northern port.

Long after the confusion of unloading was over, and the ship lay as if all voyages were ended, I dared to creep timorously along the edge of the dock, and at great risk of falling in the black water of its huge shadow, I placed my hand upon the hot hulk, and so established a mystic and exquisite connection with Pacific islands, with palm groves and all the passionate beauties they embower; with jungles, Bengal tigers, pepper, and the crushed feet of Chinese fairies. I touched Asia, the Cape of Good Hope and the

Happy Islands. I would not believe that the heat I felt was of our northern sun; to my finer sympathy it burned with equatorial fervours.

The freight was piled in the old stores. I believe that many of them remain, but they have lost their character. When I knew them, not only was I younger, but partial decay had overtaken the town; at least the bulk of its India trade had shifted to New York and Boston. But the appliances remained. There was no throng of busy traffickers, and after school, in the afternoon, I strolled by and gazed into the solemn interiors.

Silence reigned within,—silence, dimness, and piles of foreign treasure. Vast coils of cable, like tame boa-constrictors, served as seats for men with large stomachs, and heavy watch-seals, and nankeen trousers, who sat looking out of the door toward the ships, with little other sign of life than an occasional low talking, as if in their sleep. Huge hogsheads perspiring brown sugar and oozing slow molasses, as if nothing tropical could keep within bounds, but must continually expand, and exude, and overflow, stood against the walls, and had an architectural significance, for they darkly reminded me of Egyptian prints, and in the duskiness of the low vaulted store seemed cyclopean columns incomplete. Strange festoons and heaps of bags, square piles of square boxes cased in mats, bales of airy summer stuffs, which, even in winter, scoffed at cold, and shamed it by audacious assumption of eternal sun, little specimen boxes of precious dyes that even now shine through my memory, like old Venetian schools unpainted,—these were all there in rich confusion.

The stores had a twilight of dimness, the air was spicy with mingled odours. I liked to look suddenly in from the glare of sunlight outside, and then the cool sweet dimness was like the palpable breath of the far off island-groves; and if only some parrot or macaw hung within, would flaunt with glistening plumage in his cage, and as the gay hue flashed in

a chance sunbeam, call in his hard, shrill voice, as if thrusting sharp sounds upon a glistening wire from out that grateful gloom, then the enchantment was complete, and without moving, I was circumnavigating the globe.

From the old stores and the docks slowly crumbling, touched, I know not why or how, by the pensive air of past prosperity, I rambled out of town on those well-remembered afternoons, to the fields that lay upon hillsides over the harbour, and there sat, looking out to sea, fancying some distant sail proceeding to the glorious ends of the earth, to be my type and image, who would so sail, stately and successful, to all the glorious ports of the Future. Going home, I returned by the stores, which black porters were closing. But I stood long looking in, saturating my imagination, and as it appeared, my clothes, with the spicy suggestion. For when I reached home my thrifty mother—another Prue—came snuffing and smelling about me.

"Why! my son (*snuff, snuff,*) where have you been? (*snuff, snuff*). Has the baker been making (*snuff*) ginger-bread? You smell as if you'd been in (*snuff, snuff,*) a bag of cinnamon."

"I've only been on the wharves, mother."

"Well, my dear, I hope you haven't stuck up your clothes with molasses. Wharves are dirty places, and dangerous. You must take care of yourself, my son. Really this smell is (*snuff, snuff,*) very strong."

But I departed from the maternal presence, proud and happy. I was aromatic. I bore about me the true foreign air. Whoever smelt me smelt distant countries. I had nutmeg, spices, cinnamon, and cloves, without the jolly red-nose. I pleased myself with being the representative of the Indies. I was in good odour with myself and all the world.

I do not know how it is, but surely Nature makes kindly provision. An imagination so easily excited as mine could not have escaped disappointment if it had had ample opportunity and experience of the

lands it so longed to see. Therefore, although I made the India voyage, I have never been a traveller, and saving the little time I was ashore in India, I did not lose the sense of novelty and romance, which the first sight of foreign lands inspires.

That little time was all my foreign travel. I am glad of it. I see now that I should never have found the country from which the East Indiaman of my early days arrived. The palm groves do not grow with which that hand laid upon the ship placed me in magic conception. As for the lovely Indian maid whom the palmy arches bowered, she has long since clasped some native lover to her bosom, and, ripened into mild maternity, how should I know her now?

"You would find her quite as easily now as then," says my Prue, when I speak of it.

She is right again, as usual, that precious woman; and it is therefore I feel that if the chances of life have moored me fast to a book-keeper's desk, they have left all the lands I longed to see fairer and fresher in my mind than they could ever be in my memory. Upon my only voyage I used to climb into the top and search the horizon for the shore. But now in a moment of calm thought I see a more Indian India than ever mariner discerned, and do not envy the youths who go there and make fortunes, who wear grass-cloth jackets, drink iced beer, and eat curry; whose minds fall asleep, and whose bodies have liver complaints.

Unseen by me for ever, nor ever regretted, shall wave the Egyptian palms and the Italian pines. Untrodden by me, the Forum shall still echo with the footfall of imperial Rome, and the Parthenon unrifled of its marbles, look, perfect, across the Ægean blue.

My young friends return from their foreign tours elate with the smiles of a nameless Italian or Parisian belle. I know not such cheap delights; I am a suitor of Vittoria Colonna; I walk with Tasso along the terraced garden of the Villa d'Este, and look to see

Beatrice smiling down the rich gloom of the cypress shade. You stayed at the *Hôtel Europa* in Venice, at *Danielli's*, or the *Leone bianco*; I am the guest of Marino Faliero, and I whisper to his wife as we climb the giant staircase in the summer moonlight,

“Ah! senza amare  
Andare sul mare,  
Col sposo del mare,  
Non puo consolare.”

It is for the same reason that I did not care to dine with you and Aurelia, that I am content not to stand in St. Peter's. Alas! if I could see the end of it, it would not be St. Peter's. For those of us whom Nature means to keep at home, she provides entertainment. One man goes four thousand miles to Italy, and does not see it, he is so short-sighted. Another is so far-sighted that he stays in his room and sees more than Italy.

But for this very reason that it washes the shores of my possible Europe and Asia, the sea draws me contently to itself. Before I came to New York, while I was still a clerk in Boston, courting Prue, and living out of town, I never knew of a ship sailing for India or even for England and France, but I went up to the State House cupola or to the observatory on some friend's house in Roxbury, where I could not be interrupted, and there watched the departure.

The sails hung ready; the ship lay in the stream; busy little boats and puffing steamers darted about it, clung to its sides, paddled away for it, or led the way to sea, as minnows might pilot a whale. The anchor was slowly swung at the bow; I could not hear the sailors' song, but I knew they were singing. I could not see the parting friends, but I knew farewells were spoken. I did not share the confusion, although I knew what bustle there was, what hurry, what shouting, what creaking, what fall of ropes and iron, what sharp oaths, low laughs, whispers, sobs. But I was cool, high, separate. To me it was

“A painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean.”

The sails were shaken out, and the ship began to move. It was a fair breeze, perhaps, and no steamer was needed to tow her away. She receded down the bay. Friends turned back—I could not see them—and waved their hands, and wiped their eyes, and went home to dinner. Farther and farther from the ships at anchor, the lessening vessel became single and solitary upon the water. The sun sank in the west; but I watched her still. Every flash of her sails, as she tacked and turned, thrilled my heart.

Yet Prue was not on board. I had never seen one of the passengers or the crew. I did not know the consignees, nor the name of the vessel. I had shipped no adventure, nor risked any insurance, nor made any bet, but my eyes clung to her as Ariadne's to the fading sail of Theseus. The ship was freighted with more than appeared upon her papers, yet she was not a smuggler. She bore all there was of that nameless lading, yet the next ship would carry as much. She was freighted with fancy. My hopes, and wishes, and vague desires, were all on board. It seemed to me a treasure not less rich than that which filled the East Indiaman at the old dock in my boyhood.

When, at length, the ship was a sparkle upon the horizon, I waved my hand in last farewell, I strained my eyes for a last glimpse. My mind had gone to sea, and had left noise behind. But now I heard again the multitudinous murmur of the city, and went down rapidly, and threaded the short, narrow, streets to the office. Yet, believe it, every dream of that day, as I watched the vessel, was written at night to Prue. She knew my heart had not sailed away.

Those days are long past now, but still I walk upon the Battery and look towards the Narrows, and know that beyond them, separated only by the sea, are many of whom I would so gladly know, and so rarely hear. The sea rolls between us like the lapse of



dusky ages. They trusted themselves to it, and it bore them away far and far as if into the past. Last night I read of Antony, but I have not heard from Christopher these many months, and by so much farther away is he, so much older and more remote, than Antony. As for William, he is as vague as any of the shepherd kings of ante-Pharaonic dynasties.

It is the sea that has done it, it has carried them off and put them away upon its other side. It is fortunate the sea did not put them upon its under-side. Are they hale and happy still? Is their hair grey, and have they mustachios? Or have they taken to wigs and crutches? Are they popes or cardinals yet? Do they feast with Lucrezia Borgia, or preach red republicanism to the Council of Ten? Do they sing, *Behold how brightly breaks the morning* with Masaniello? Do they laugh at Ulysses and skip ashore to the Syrens? Has Mesrour, chief of the Eunuchs, caught them with Zobeide in the Caliph's garden, or have they made cheese cakes without pepper? Friends of my youth, where in your wanderings have you tasted the blissful Lotus, that you neither come nor send us tidings?

Across the sea also came idle rumours, as false reports steal into history and defile fair fames. Was it longer ago than yesterday that I walked with my cousin, then recently a widow, and talked with her of the countries to which she meant to sail? She was young, and dark-eyed, and wore great hoops of gold, barbaric gold, in her ears. The hope of Italy, the thought of living there, had risen like a dawn in the darkness of her mind. I talked and listened by rapid turns.

Was it longer ago than yesterday that she told me of her splendid plans, how palaces tapestried with gorgeous paintings should be cheaply hired, and the best of teachers lead her children to the completest and most various knowledge; how,—and with her slender pittance!—she should have a box at the



opera, and a carriage, and liveried servants, and in perfect health and youth, lead a perfect life in a perfect climate?

And now what do I hear? Why does a tear sometimes drop so audibly upon my paper, that Titbottom looks across with a sort of mild rebuking glance of inquiry, whether it is kind to let even a single tear fall, when an ocean of tears is pent up in hearts that would burst and overflow if but one drop should force its way out? Why across the sea came faint gusty stories, like low voices in the wind, of a cloistered garden and sunny seclusion—and a life of unknown and unexplained luxury. What is this picture of a pale face showered with streaming black hair, and large sad eyes looking upon lovely and noble children playing in the sunshine—and a brow pained with thought straining into their destiny? Who is this figure, a man tall and comely, with melting eyes and graceful motion, who comes and goes at pleasure, who is not a husband, yet has the key of the cloistered garden?

I do not know. They are secrets of the sea. The pictures pass before my mind suddenly and unawares, and I feel the tears rising that I would gladly repress. Titbottom looks at me, then stands by the window of the office and leans his brow against the cold iron bars, and looks down into the little square paved court. I take my hat and steal out of the office for a few minutes, and slowly pace the hurrying streets. Meek-eyed Alice! magnificent Maud! sweet baby Lilian! why does the sea imprison you so far away, when will you return, where do you linger? The water laps idly about docks,—lies calm, or gaily heaves. Why does it bring me doubts and fears now, that brought such bounty of beauty in the days long gone?

I remember that the day when my dark-haired cousin, with hoops of barbaric gold in her ears, sailed for Italy, was quarter-day, and we balanced the books at the office. It was nearly noon, and in my im-

patience to be away, I had not added my columns with sufficient care. The inexorable hand of the office clock pointed sternly towards twelve, and the remorseless pendulum ticked solemnly to noon.

To a man whose pleasures are not many, and rather small, the loss of such an event as saying farewell and wishing God-speed to a friend going to Europe, is a great loss. It was so to me, especially, because there was always more to me, in every departure, than the parting and the farewell. I was gradually renouncing this pleasure, as I saw small prospect of ending before noon, when Titbottom, after looking at me a moment, came to my side of the desk, and said :

“I should like to finish that for you.”

I looked at him : poor Titbottom ! he had no friends to wish God-speed upon any journey. I quietly wiped my pen, took down my hat, and went out. It was in the days of sail packets and less regularity, when going to Europe was more of an epoch in life. How gaily my cousin stood upon the deck and detailed to me her plan ! How merrily the children shouted and sang ! How long I held my cousin's little hand in mine, and gazed into her great eyes, remembering that they would see and touch the things that were invisible to me for ever, but all the more precious and fair ! She kissed me—I was younger then—there were tears, I remember, and prayers, and promises, a waving handkerchief,—a fading sail.

It was only the other day that I saw another parting of the same kind. I was not a principal, only a spectator ; but so fond am I of sharing, afar off, as it were, and unseen, the sympathies of human beings, that I cannot avoid often going to the dock upon steamer-days and giving myself to that pleasant and melancholy observation. There is always a crowd, but this day it was almost impossible to advance through the masses of people. The eager faces hurried by ; a constant stream poured up the gangway into the steamer, and the upper deck, to which I

gradually made my way, was crowded with the passengers and their friends.

There was one group upon which my eyes first fell, and upon which my memory lingers. A glance, brilliant as daybreak,—a voice,

“Her voice’s music,—call it the well’s bubbling, the bird’s warble,”

a goddess girdled with flowers, and smiling farewell upon a circle of worshippers, to each one of whom that gracious calmness made the smile sweeter, and the farewell more sad—other figures, other flowers, an angel face—all these I saw in that group as I was swayed up and down the deck by the eager swarm of people. The hour came, and I went on shore with the rest. The plank was drawn away—the captain raised his hand—the huge steamer slowly moved—a cannon was fired—the ship was gone.

The sun sparkled upon the water as they sailed away. In five minutes the steamer was as much separated from the shore as if it had been at sea a thousand years.

I leaned against a post upon the dock and looked around. Ranged upon the edge of the wharf stood that band of worshippers, waving handkerchiefs and straining their eyes to see the last smile of farewell—did any eager selfish eye hope to see a tear? They to whom the handkerchiefs were waved stood high upon the stern, holding flowers. Over them hung the great flag, raised by the gentle wind into the graceful folds of a canopy,—say rather a gorgeous gonfalon waved over the triumphant departure, over that supreme youth, and bloom, and beauty, going out across the mystic ocean to carry a finer charm and more human splendour into those realms of my imagination beyond the sea.

“You will return, O youth and beauty!” I said to my dreaming and foolish self, as I contemplated those fair figures, “richer than Alexander with Indian spoils. All that historic association, that copious

civilization, those grandeurs and graces of art, that variety and picturesqueness of life, will mellow and deepen your experience even as time silently touches those old pictures into a more persuasive and pathetic beauty, and as this increasing summer sheds ever softer lustre upon the landscape. You will return conquerors and not conquered. You will bring Europe, even as Aurelian brought Zenobia captive, to deck your homeward triumph. I do not wonder that these clouds break away, I do not wonder that the sun presses out and floods all the air, and land, and water, with light that graces with happy omens your stately farewell."

But if my faded face looked after them with such earnest and longing emotion,—I, a solitary old man, unknown to those fair beings, and standing apart from that band of lovers, yet in that moment bound more closely to them than they knew,—how was it with those whose hearts sailed away with that youth and beauty? I watched them closely from behind my post. I knew that life had paused with them; that the world stood still. I knew that the long, long summer would be only a yearning regret. I knew that each asked himself the mournful question, "Is this parting typical—this slow, sad, sweet, recession?" And I knew that they did not care to ask whether they should meet again, nor dare to contemplate the chances of the sea.

The steamer swept on, she was near Staten Island, and a final gun boomed far and low across the water. The crowd was dispersing, but the little group remained. Was it not all Hood had sung?

"I saw thee, lovely Inez,  
Descend along the shore  
With bands of noble gentlemen,  
And banners waved before ;  
And gentle youths and maidens gay,  
And snowy plumes they wore ;—  
It would have been a beauteous dream,  
If it had been no more !"

"O youth !" I said to them without speaking,

"be it gently said, as it is solemnly thought, should they return no more, yet in your memories the high hour of their loveliness is for ever enshrined. Should they come no more they never will be old, nor changed, to you. You will wax and wane, you will suffer, and struggle, and grow old; but this summer vision will smile, immortal, upon your lives, and those fair faces shall shed, for ever, from under that slowly waving flag, hope and peace."

It is so elsewhere; it is the tenderness of Nature. Long, long ago we lost our first-born, Prue and I. Since then, we have grown older and our children with us. Change comes, and grief, perhaps, and decay. We are happy, our children are obedient and gay. But should Prue live until she has lost us all, and laid us, gray and weary, in our graves, she will have always one babe in her heart. Every mother who has lost an infant, has gained a child of immortal youth. Can you find comfort here, lovers, whose mistress has sailed away?

I did not ask the question aloud, I thought it only, as I watched the youths, and turned away while they still stood gazing. One, I observed, climbed a post and waved his black hat before the white-washed side of the shed over the dock, whence I supposed he would tumble into the water. Another had tied a handkerchief to the end of a somewhat baggy umbrella, and in the eagerness of gazing, had forgotten to wave it, so that it hung mournfully down, as if overpowered with grief it could not express. The entranced youth still held the umbrella aloft. It seemed to me as if he had struck his flag; or as if one of my cravats were airing in that sunlight. A negro carter was joking with an apple-woman at the entrance of the dock. The steamer was out of sight.

I found that I was belated and hurried back to my desk. Alas! poor lovers; I wonder if they are watching still? Has he fallen exhausted from the post into the water? Is that handkerchief, bleached and rent, still pendant upon that somewhat baggy umbrella?

"Youth and beauty went to Europe to-day," said I to Prue, as I stirred my tea at evening.

As I spoke, our youngest daughter brought me the sugar. She is just eighteen, and her name should be Hebe. I took a lump of sugar and looked at her. She had never seemed so lovely, and as I dropped the lump in my cup, I kissed her. I glanced at Prue as I did so. The dear woman smiled, but did not answer my exclamation.

Thus, without travelling, I travel, and share the emotions of those I do not know. But sometimes the old longing comes over me as in the days when I timidly touched the huge East Indiaman, and magnetically sailed around the world.

It was but a few days after the lovers and I waved farewell to the steamer, and while the lovely figures standing under the great gonfalon were as vivid in my mind as ever, that a day of premature sunny sadness, like those of the Indian summer, drew me away from the office early in the afternoon: for fortunately it is our dull season now, and even Titbottom sometimes leaves the office by five o'clock. Although why he should leave it, or where he goes, or what he does, I do not well know. Before I knew him, I used sometimes to meet him with a man whom I was afterwards told was Bartleby, the scrivener. Even then it seemed to me that they rather clubbed their loneliness than made society for each other. Recently I have not seen Bartleby; but Titbottom seems no more solitary because he is alone.

I strolled into the Battery as I sauntered about. Staten Island looked so alluring, tender-hued with summer and melting in the haze, that I resolved to indulge myself in a pleasure-trip. It was a little selfish, perhaps, to go alone, but I looked at my watch, and saw that if I should hurry home for Prue the trip would be lost; then I should be disappointed, and she would be grieved.

Ought I not rather (I like to begin questions, which I am going to answer affirmatively, with *ought*,) to

take the trip and recount my adventures to Prue upon my return, whereby I should actually enjoy the excursion and the pleasure of telling her; while she would enjoy my story and be glad that I was pleased? Ought I wilfully to deprive us both of this various enjoyment by aiming at a higher, which, in losing, we should lose all?

Unfortunately, just as I was triumphantly answering "Certainly not!" another question marched into my mind, escorted by a very defiant *ought*.

"Ought I to go when I have such a debate about it?"

But while I was perplexed, and scoffing at my own scruples, the ferry-bell suddenly rang, and answered all my questions. Involuntarily I hurried on board. The boat slipped from the dock. I went up on deck to enjoy the view of the city from the bay, but just as I sat down, and meant to have said "how beautiful!" I found myself asking:

"Ought I to have come?"

Lost in perplexing debate, I saw little of the scenery of the bay; but the remembrance of Prue and the gentle influence of the day plunged me into a mood of pensive reverie which nothing tended to destroy, until we suddenly arrived at the landing.

As I was stepping ashore, I was greeted by Mr. Bourne, who passes the summer on the island, and who hospitably asked if I were going his way. His way was toward the southern end of the island, and I said yes. His pockets were full of papers and his brow of wrinkles; so when we reached the point where he should turn off, I asked him to let me alight, although he was very anxious to carry me wherever I was going.

"I am only strolling about," I answered, as I clambered carefully out of the wagon.

"Strolling about?" asked he, in a bewildered manner; "do people stroll about, now-a-days?"

"Sometimes," I answered, smiling, as I pulled my trousers down over my boots, for they had dragged



up, as I stepped out of the wagon, "and beside, what can an old book-keeper do better in the dull season than stroll about this pleasant island, and watch the ships at sea?"

Bourne looked at me with his weary eyes.

"I'd give five thousand dollars a year for a dull season," said he, "but as for strolling, I've forgotten how."

As he spoke, his eyes wandered dreamily across the fields and woods, and were fastened upon the distant sails.

"It is pleasant," he said musingly, and fell into silence. But I had no time to spare, so I wished him good-afternoon.

"I hope your wife is well," said Bourne to me, as I turned away. Poor Bourne! He drove on alone in his wagon.

But I made haste to the most solitary point upon the southern shore, and there sat, glad to be so near the sea. There was that warm, sympathetic silence in the air, that gives to Indian-summer days almost a human tenderness of feeling. A delicate haze, that seemed only the kindly air made visible, hung over the sea. The water lapped languidly among the rocks, and the voices of children in a boat beyond, rang musically, and gradually receded, until they were lost in the distance.

It was some time before I was aware of the outline of a large ship, drawn vaguely upon the mist, which I supposed, at first, to be only a kind of mirage. But the more steadfastly I gazed, the more distinct it became, and I could no longer doubt that I saw a stately ship lying at anchor, not more than half a mile from the land.

"It is an extraordinary place to anchor," I said to myself, "or can she be ashore?"

There were no signs of distress; the sails were carefully clewed up, and there were no sailors in the tops, nor upon the shrouds. A flag, of which I could not see the device or the nation, hung heavily at the



stern, and looked as if it had fallen asleep. My curiosity began to be singularly excited. The form of the vessel seemed not to be permanent; but within a quarter of an hour, I was sure that I had seen half a dozen different ships. As I gazed, I saw no more sails nor masts, but a long range of oars, flashing like a golden fringe, or straight and stiff, like the legs of a sea-monster.

"It is some bloated crab, or lobster, magnified by the mist," I said to myself, complacently.

But, at the same moment, there was a concentrated flashing and blazing in one spot among the rigging, and it was as if I saw a beatified ram, or, more truly, a sheep-skin, splendid as the hair of Berenice.

"Is that the golden fleece?" I thought. "But, surely, Jason and the Argonauts have gone home long since. Do people go on gold-fleece expeditions now?" I asked myself, in perplexity. "Can this be a California steamer?"

How could I have thought it a steamer? Did I not see those sails, "thin and sere"? Did I not feel the melancholy of that solitary bark? It had a mystic aura; a boreal brilliancy shimmered in its wake, for it was drifting seaward. A strange fear curdled along my veins. That summer sun shone cool. The weary, battered ship was gashed, as if gnawed by ice. There was terror in the air, as a "skinny hand so brown" waved to me from the deck. I lay as one bewitched. The hand of the ancient mariner seemed to be reaching for me, like the hand of death.

Death? Why, as I was inly praying Prue's forgiveness for my solitary ramble and consequent demise, a glance like the fulness of summer splendour gushed over me; the odour of flowers and of eastern gums made all the atmosphere. I breathed the orient, and lay drunk with balm, while that strange ship, a golden galley now, with glittering draperies festooned with flowers, paced to the measured beat of oars along the calm, and Cleopatra smiled alluringly from the great pageant's heart.

Was this a barge for summer waters, this peculiar ship I saw? It had a ruined dignity, a cumbrous grandeur, although its masts were shattered, and its sails rent. It hung preternaturally still upon the sea, as if tormented and exhausted by long driving and drifting. I saw no sailors, but a great Spanish ensign floated over, and waved, a funereal plume. I knew it then. The armada was long since scattered; but, floating far

“on desolate rainy seas,”

lost for centuries, and again restored to sight, here lay one of the fated ships of Spain. The huge galleon seemed to fill all the air, built up against the sky, like the gilded ships of Claude Lorraine against the sunset.

But it fled, for now a black flag fluttered at the mast-head—a long low vessel darted swiftly where the vast ship lay; there came a shrill piping whistle, the clash of cutlasses, fierce ringing oaths, sharp pistol cracks, the thunder of command, and over all the gusty yell of a demoniac chorus,

“My name was Robert Kidd, when I sailed.”

—There were no clouds longer, but under a serene sky I saw a bark moving with festal pomp, thronged with grave senators in flowing robes, and one with ducal bonnet in the midst, holding a ring. The smooth bark swam upon a sea like that of southern latitudes. I saw the Bucentoro and the nuptials of Venice and the Adriatic.

Who were those coming over the side? Who crowded the boats, and sprang into the water, men in old Spanish armour, with plumes and swords, and bearing a glittering cross? Who was he standing upon the deck with folded arms and gazing towards the shore, as lovers on their mistresses and martyrs upon heaven? Over what distant and tumultuous seas had this small craft escaped from other centuries and distant shores? What sounds of foreign hymns,

forgotten now, were these, and what solemnity of debarkation? Was this grave form Columbus?

Yet these were not so Spanish as they seemed just now. This group of stern-faced men with high peaked hats, who knelt upon the cold deck and looked out upon a shore which, I could see by their joyless smile of satisfaction, was rough, and bare, and forbidding. In that soft afternoon, standing in mournful groups upon the small deck, why did they seem to me to be seeing the sad shores of wintry New England? That phantom-ship could not be the May Flower!

I gazed long upon the shifting illusion.

"If I should board this ship," I asked myself, "where should I go? whom should I meet? what should I see? Is not this the vessel that shall carry me to my Europe, my foreign countries, my impossible India, the Atlantis that I have lost?"

As I sat staring at it I could not but wonder whether Bourne had seen this sail when he looked upon the water? Does he see such sights every day, because he lives down here? Is it not perhaps a magic yacht of his; and does he slip off privately after business hours to Venice, and Spain, and Egypt, perhaps to El Dorado? Does he run races with Ptolemy, Philopater and Hiero of Syracuse, rare regattas on fabulous seas?

Why not? He is a rich man, too, and why should not a New York merchant do what a Syracuse tyrant and an Egyptian prince did? Has Bourne's yacht those sumptuous chambers, like Philopater's galley, of which the greater part was made of split cedar, and of Milesian cypress; and has he twenty doors put together with beams of citron-wood, with many ornaments? Has the roof of his cabin a carved golden face, and is his sail linen with a purple fringe?

"I suppose it is so," I said to myself, as I looked wistfully at the ship, which began to glimmer and melt in the haze.

"It certainly is not a fishing-smack?" I asked, doubtfully.

No, it must be Bourne's magic yacht; I was sure of it. I could not help laughing at poor old Hiero, whose cabins were divided into many rooms, with floors composed of mosaic work, of all kinds of stones tessellated. And, on this mosaic, the whole story of the Iliad was depicted in a marvellous manner. He had gardens "of all sorts of most wonderful beauty, enriched with all sorts of plants, and shadowed by roofs of lead or tiles. And, besides this, there were tents roofed with boughs of white ivy and of the vine—the roots of which derived their moisture from casks full of earth, and were watered in the same manner as the gardens. There were temples, also, with doors of ivory and citron-wood, furnished in the most exquisite manner, with pictures and statues, and with goblets and vases of every form and shape imaginable."

"Poor Bourne!" I said. "I suppose his is finer than Hiero's, which is a thousand years old. Poor Bourne! I don't wonder that his eyes are weary, and that he would pay so dearly for a day of leisure. Dear me! is it one of the prices that must be paid for wealth, the keeping of a magic yacht?"

Involuntarily, I had asked the question aloud.

"The magic yacht is not Bourne's," answered a familiar voice. I looked up, and Titbottom stood by my side. "Do you not know that all Bourne's money would not buy the yacht?" asked he. "He cannot even see it. And if he could, it would be no magic yacht to him, but only a battered and solitary hulk."

The haze blew gently away, as Titbottom spoke, and there lay my Spanish galleon, my Bucentoro, my Cleopatra's galley, Columbus's Santa Maria, and the Pilgrims' May Flower, an old bleaching wreck upon the beach.

"Do you suppose any true love is in vain?" asked Titbottom solemnly, as he stood bareheaded, and the

soft sunset wind played with his few hairs. "Could Cleopatra smile upon Antony, and the moon upon Endymion, and the sea not love its lovers?"

The fresh air breathed upon our faces as he spoke. I might have sailed in Hiero's ship, or in Roman galleys, had I lived long centuries ago, and been born a nobleman. But would it be so sweet a remembrance, that of lying on a marble couch, under a golden-faced roof, and within doors of citron-wood and ivory, and sailing in that state to greet queens who are mummies now, as that of seeing those fair figures, standing under the great gonfalon, themselves as lovely as Egyptian belles, and going to see more than Egypt dreamed?

The yacht was mine, then, and not Bourne's. I took Titbottom's arm, and we sauntered toward the ferry. What sumptuous sultan was I, with this sad vizier? My languid odalisque, the sea, lay at my feet as we advanced, and sparkled all over with a sunset smile. Had I trusted myself to her arms, to be borne to the realms that I shall never see, or sailed long voyages towards Cathay, I am not sure I should have brought a more precious present to Prue, than the story of that afternoon.

"Ought I to have gone alone?" I asked her, as I ended.

"I ought not to have gone with you," she replied, "for I had work to do. But how strange that you should see such things at Staten Island. I never did, Mr. Titbottom," said she, turning to my deputy, whom I had asked to tea.

"Madam," answered Titbottom, with a kind of wan and quaint dignity, so that I could not help thinking he must have arrived in that stray ship from the Spanish armada, "neither did Mr. Bourne."

## TITBOTTOM'S SPECTACLES

"In my mind's eye, Horatio."

*Hamlet.*

PRUE and I do not entertain much; our means forbid it. In truth, other people entertain for us. We enjoy that hospitality of which no account is made. We see the show, and hear the music, and smell the flowers, of great festivities, tasting, as it were, the drippings from rich dishes.

Our own dinner service is remarkably plain, our dinners, even on state occasions, are strictly in keeping, and almost our only guest is Titbottom. I buy a handful of roses as I come up from the office, perhaps, and Prue arranges them so prettily in a glass dish for the centre of the table, that, even when I have hurried out to see Aurelia step into her carriage to go out to dine, I have thought that the bouquet she carried was not more beautiful because it was more costly.

I grant that it was more harmonious with her superb beauty and her rich attire. And I have no doubt that if Aurelia knew the old man, whom she must have seen so often watching her, and his wife, who ornaments her sex with as much sweetness, although with less splendour, than Aurelia herself, she would also acknowledge that the nosegay of roses was as fine and fit upon their table, as her own sumptuous bouquet is for herself. I have so much faith in the perception of that lovely lady.

It is my habit,—I hope I may say, my nature,—to believe the best of people, rather than the worst. If I thought that all this sparkling setting of beauty,—this fine fashion,—these blazing jewels, and lustrous silks, and airy gauzes, embellished with gold-threaded embroidery and wrought in a thousand exquisite elaborations, so that I cannot see one of those

lovely girls pass me by, without thanking God for the vision,—if I thought that this was all, and that, underneath her lace flounces and diamond bracelets, Aurelia was a sullen, selfish woman, then I should turn sadly homeward, for I should see that her jewels were flashing scorn upon the object they adorned, that her laces were of a more exquisite loveliness than the woman whom they merely touched with a superficial grace. It would be like a gaily decorated mausoleum,—bright to see, but silent and dark within.

“Great excellences, my dear Prue,” I sometimes allow myself to say, “lie concealed in the depths of character, like pearls at the bottom of the sea. Under the laughing, glancing surface, how little they are suspected! Perhaps love is nothing else than the sight of them by one person. Hence every man’s mistress is apt to be an enigma to everybody else.

“I have no doubt that when Aurelia is engaged, people will say she is a most admirable girl, certainly; but they cannot understand why any man should be in love with her. As if it were at all necessary that they should! And her lover, like a boy who finds a pearl in the public street, and wonders as much that others did not see it as that he did, will tremble until he knows his passion is returned; feeling, of course, that the whole world must be in love with this paragon, who cannot possibly smile upon anything so unworthy as he.

“I hope, therefore, my dear Mrs. Prue,” I continue, and my wife looks up, with pleased pride, from her work, as if I were such an irresistible humorist, “you will allow me to believe that the depth may be calm, although the surface is dancing. If you tell me that Aurelia is but a giddy girl, I shall believe that you think so. But I shall know, all the while, what profound dignity, and sweetness, and peace lie at the foundation of her character.”

I say such things to Titbottom, during the dull



season at the office. And I have known him sometimes to reply, with a kind of dry, sad humour, not as if he enjoyed the joke, but as if the joke must be made, that he saw no reason why I should be dull because the season was so.

"And what do I know of Aurelia, or any other girl?" he says to me with that abstracted air; "I, whose Aurelias were of another century, and another zone."

Then he falls into a silence which it seems quite profane to interrupt. But as we sit upon our high stools, at the desk, opposite each other, I leaning upon my elbows, and looking at him, he, with side-long face, glancing out of the window, as if it commanded a boundless landscape, instead of a dim, dingy office court, I cannot refrain from saying:

"Well!"

He turns slowly, and I go chatting on,—a little too loquacious perhaps, about those young girls. But I know that Titbottom regards such an excess as venial, for his sadness is so sweet that you could believe it the reflection of a smile from long, long years ago.

One day, after I had been talking for a long time, and we had put up our books, and were preparing to leave, he stood for some time by the window, gazing with a drooping intentness, as if he really saw something more than the dark court, and said slowly:

"Perhaps you would have different impressions of things, if you saw them through my spectacles."

There was no change in his expression. He still looked from the window, and I said:

"Titbottom, I did not know that you used glasses. I have never seen you wearing spectacles."

"No, I don't often wear them. I am not very fond of looking through them. But sometimes an irresistible necessity compels me to put them on, and I cannot help seeing."

Titbottom sighed.

"Is it so grievous a fate to see?" inquired I.



"Yes; through my spectacles," he said, turning slowly, and looking at me with wan solemnity.

It grew dark as we stood in the office talking, and, taking our hats, we went out together. The narrow street of business was deserted. The heavy iron shutters were gloomily closed over the windows. From one or two offices struggled the dim gleam of an early candle, by whose light some perplexed accountant sat belated, and hunting for his error. A careless clerk passed, whistling. But the great tide of life had ebbed. We heard its roar far away, and the sound stole into that silent street like the murmur of the ocean into an inland dell.

"You will come and dine with us, Titbottom?"

He assented by continuing to walk with me, and I think we were both glad when we reached the house, and Prue came to meet us, saying:

"Do you know I hoped you would bring Mr. Titbottom to dine?"

Titbottom smiled gently, and answered:

"He might have brought his spectacles with him, and have been a happier man for it."

Prue looked a little puzzled.

"My dear," I said, "you must know that our friend, Mr. Titbottom, is the happy possessor of a pair of wonderful spectacles. I have never seen them, indeed; and, from what he says, I should be rather afraid of being seen by them. Most short-sighted persons are very glad to have the help of glasses; but Mr. Titbottom seems to find very little pleasure in his."

"It is because they make him too far-sighted, perhaps," interrupted Prue quietly, as she took the silver soup-ladle from the sideboard.

We sipped our wine after dinner, and Prue took her work. Can a man be too far-sighted? I did not ask the question aloud. The very tone in which Prue had spoken, convinced me that he might.

"At least," I said, "Mr. Titbottom will not refuse

to tell us the history of his mysterious spectacles. I have known plenty of magic in eyes" (and I glanced at the tender blue eyes of Prue), "but I have not heard of any enchanted glasses."

"Yet you must have seen the glass in which your wife looks every morning, and, I take it, that glass must be daily enchanted," said Titbottom, with a bow of quaint respect to my wife.

I do not think I have seen such a blush upon Prue's cheek since—well, since a great many years ago.

"I will gladly tell you the history of my spectacles," began Titbottom. "It is very simple; and I am not at all sure that a great many other people have not a pair of the same kind. I have never, indeed, heard of them by the gross, like those of our young friend, Moses, the son of the Vicar of Wakefield. In fact, I think a gross would be quite enough to supply the world. It is a kind of article for which the demand does not increase with use. If we should all wear spectacles like mine, we should never smile any more. Or—I am not quite sure—we should all be very happy."

"A very important difference," said Prue, counting her stitches.

"You know my grandfather Titbottom was a West Indian. A large proprietor, and an easy man, he basked in the tropical sun, leading his quiet, luxurious life. He lived much alone, and was what people call eccentric—by which I understand, that he was very much himself, and, refusing the influence of other people, they had their revenges, and called him names. It is a habit not exclusively tropical. I think I have seen the same thing even in this city.

"But he was greatly beloved—my bland and bountiful grandfather. He was so large-hearted and open-handed. He was so friendly, and thoughtful, and genial, that even his jokes had the air of graceful benedictions. He did not seem to grow old, and he was one of those who never appear to have been very

young. He flourished in a perennial maturity, an immortal middle-age.

"My grandfather lived upon one of the small islands—St. Kitt's, perhaps—and his domain extended to the sea. His house, a rambling West Indian mansion, was surrounded with deep, spacious piazzas, covered with luxurious lounges, among which one capacious chair was his peculiar seat. They tell me, he used sometimes to sit there for the whole day, his great, soft, brown eyes fastened upon the sea, watching the specks of sails that flashed upon the horizon, while the evanescent expressions chased each other over his placid face, as if it reflected the calm and changing sea before him.

"His morning costume was an ample dressing-gown of gorgeously-flowered silk, and his morning was very apt to last all day. He rarely read; but he would pace the great piazza for hours, with his hands buried in the pockets of his dressing-gown, and an air of sweet reverie, which any book must be a very entertaining one to produce.

"Society, of course, he saw little. There was some slight apprehension that, if he were bidden to social entertainments, he might forget his coat, or arrive without some other essential part of his dress; and there is a sly tradition in the Titbottom family, that once, having been invited to a ball in honour of a new governor of the island, my grandfather Titbottom sauntered into the hall towards midnight, wrapped in the gorgeous flowers of his dressing-gown, and with his hands buried in the pockets, as usual. There was great excitement among the guests, and immense deprecation of gubernatorial ire. Fortunately, it happened that the governor and my grandfather were old friends, and there was no offence. But, as they were conversing together, one of the distressed managers cast indignant glances at the brilliant costume of my grandfather, who summoned him, and asked courteously :

" ' Did you invite me, or my coat ? ' "

“ ‘ You, in a proper coat,’ replied the manager.

“ The governor smiled approvingly, and looked at my grandfather.

“ ‘ My friend,’ said he to the manager, ‘ I beg your pardon, I forgot.’

“ The next day, my grandfather was seen promenading in full ball dress along the streets of the little town.

“ ‘ They ought to know,’ said he, ‘ that I have a proper coat, and that not contempt, nor poverty, but forgetfulness, sent me to a ball in my dressing-gown.’

“ He did not much frequent social festivals after this failure, but he always told the story with satisfaction and a quiet smile.

“ To a stranger, life upon those little islands is uniform even to weariness. But the old native dons, like my grandfather, ripen in the prolonged sunshine, like the turtle upon the Bahama banks, nor know of existence more desirable. Life in the tropics I take to be a placid torpidity.

“ During the long, warm mornings of nearly half a century, my grandfather Titbottom had sat in his dressing-gown, and gazed at the sea. But one calm June day, as he slowly paced the piazza after breakfast, his dreamy glance was arrested by a little vessel, evidently nearing the shore. He called for his spy-glass, and, surveying the craft, saw that she came from the neighbouring island. She glided smoothly, slowly, over the summer sea. The warm morning air was sweet with perfumes, and silent with heat. The sea sparkled languidly, and the brilliant blue sky hung cloudlessly over. Scores of little island vessels had my grandfather seen coming over the horizon, and cast anchor in the port. Hundreds of summer mornings had the white sails flashed and faded, like vague faces through forgotten dreams. But this time he laid down the spyglass, and leaned against a column of the piazza, and watched the vessel with an intentness that he could not explain. She came

nearer and nearer, a graceful spectre in the dazzling morning.

“‘Decidedly, I must step down and see about that vessel,’ said my grandfather Titbottom.

“He gathered his ample dressing-gown about him, and stepped from the piazza, with no other protection from the sun than the little smoking-cap upon his head. His face wore a calm, beaming smile, as if he loved the whole world. He was not an old man; but there was almost a patriarchal pathos in his expression, as he sauntered along in the sunshine towards the shore. A group of idle gazers was collected, to watch the arrival. The little vessel furled her sails, and drifted slowly landward, and, as she was of very light draft, she came close to the shelving shore. A long plank was put out from her side, and the debarkation commenced.

“My grandfather Titbottom stood looking on, to see the passengers as they passed. There were but a few of them, and mostly traders from the neighbouring island. But suddenly the face of a young girl appeared over the side of the vessel, and she stepped upon the plank to descend. My grandfather Titbottom instantly advanced, and, moving briskly, reached the top of the plank at the same moment, and with the old tassel of his cap flashing in the sun, and one hand in the pocket of his dressing-gown, with the other he handed the young lady carefully down the plank. That young lady was afterwards my grandmother Titbottom.

“For, over the gleaming sea which he had watched so long, and which seemed thus to reward his patient gaze, came his bride that sunny morning.

“‘Of course, we are happy,’ he used to say to her, after they were married: ‘For you are the gift of the sun I have loved so long and so well.’ And my grandfather Titbottom would lay his hand so tenderly upon the golden hair of his young bride, that you could fancy him a devout Parsee, caressing sunbeams.

“There were endless festivities upon occasion of

the marriage; and my grandfather did not go to one of them in his dressing-gown. The gentle sweetness of his wife melted every heart into love and sympathy. He was much older than she, without doubt. But age, as he used to say with a smile of immortal youth, is a matter of feeling, not of years.

"And if, sometimes, as she sat by his side on the piazza, her fancy looked through her eyes upon that summer sea, and saw a younger lover, perhaps some one of those graceful and glowing heroes who occupy the foreground of all young maidens' visions by the sea, yet she could not find one more generous and gracious, nor fancy one more worthy and loving than my grandfather Titbottom.

"And if, in the moonlit midnight, while he lay calmly sleeping, she leaned out of the window, and sank into vague reveries of sweet possibility, and watched the gleaming path of the moonlight upon the water, until the dawn glided over it—it was only that mood of nameless regret and longing, which underlies all human happiness; or it was the vision of that life of cities and the world, which she had never seen, but of which she had often read, and which looked very fair and alluring across the sea, to a girlish imagination, which knew that it should never see that reality.

"These West Indian years were the great days of the family," said Titbottom, with an air of majestic and regal regret, pausing, and musing, in our little parlour, like a late Stuart in exile, remembering England.

Prue raised her eyes from her work, and looked at him with subdued admiration; for I have observed that, like the rest of her sex, she has a singular sympathy with the representative of a reduced family.

Perhaps it is their finer perception, which leads these tender-hearted women to recognize the divine right of social superiority so much more readily than we; and yet, much as Titbottom was enhanced in my wife's admiration by the discovery that his dusky sadness of nature and expression was, as it were, the

expiring gleam and late twilight of ancestral splendours, I doubt if Mr. Bourne would have preferred him for book-keeper a moment sooner upon that account. In truth, I have observed, down town, that the fact of your ancestors doing nothing, is not considered good proof that you can do anything.

But Prue and her sex regard sentiment more than action, and I understand easily enough why she is never tired of hearing me read of Prince Charlie. If Titbottom had been only a little younger, a little handsomer, a little more gallantly dressed—in fact, a little more of a Prince Charlie, I am sure her eyes would not have fallen again upon her work so tranquilly, as he resumed his story.

“I can remember my grandfather Titbottom, although I was a very young child, and he was a very old man. My young mother and my young grandmother are very distinct figures in my memory, ministering to the old gentleman, wrapped in his dressing-gown, and seated upon the piazza. I remember his white hair, and his calm smile, and how, not long before he died, he called me to him, and laying his hand upon my head, said to me :

“‘My child, the world is not this great sunny piazza, nor life the fairy stories which the women tell you here, as you sit in their laps. I shall soon be gone, but I want to leave with you some memento of my love for you, and I know of nothing more valuable than these spectacles, which your grandmother brought from her native island, when she arrived here one fine summer morning, long ago. I cannot tell whether, when you grow older, you will regard them as a gift of the greatest value, or as something that you had been happier never to have possessed.’

“‘But, grandpapa, I am not short-sighted.’

“‘My son, are you not human?’ said the old gentleman; and how shall I ever forget the thoughtful sadness with which, at the same time, he handed me the spectacles?



"Instinctively I put them on, and looked at my grandfather. But I saw no grandfather, no piazza, no flowered dressing-gown; I saw only a luxuriant palm-tree, waving broadly over a tranquil landscape; pleasant homes clustered around it; gardens teeming with fruit and flowers; flocks quietly feeding; birds wheeling and chirping. I heard children's voices, and the low lullaby of happy mothers. The sound of cheerful singing came wafted from distant fields upon the light breeze. Golden harvests glistened out of sight, and I caught their rustling whispers of prosperity. A warm, mellow atmosphere bathed the whole.

"I have seen copies of the landscapes of the Italian painter Claude, which seemed to me faint reminiscences of that calm and happy vision. But all this peace and prosperity seemed to flow from the spreading palm as from a fountain.

"I do not know how long I looked, but I had, apparently, no power, as I had no will, to remove the spectacles. What a wonderful island must Nevis be, thought I, if people carry such pictures in their pockets, only by buying a pair of spectacles! What wonder that my dear grandmother Titbottom has lived such a placid life, and has blessed us all with her sunny temper, when she has lived surrounded by such images of peace!

"My grandfather died. But still, in the warm morning sunshine upon the piazza, I felt his placid presence, and as I crawled into his great chair, and drifted on in reverie through the still, tropical day, it was as if his soft, dreamy eye had passed into my soul. My grandmother cherished his memory with tender regret. A violent passion of grief for his loss was no more possible than for the pensive decay of the year.

"We have no portrait of him, but I see always, when I remember him, that peaceful and luxuriant palm. And I think that to have known one good old man—one man who, through the chances and



rub of a long life, has carried his heart in his hand, like a palm branch, waving all discords into peace, helps our faith in God, in ourselves, and in each other, more than many sermons. I hardly know whether to be grateful to my grandfather for the spectacles; and yet when I remember that it is to them I owe the pleasant image of him which I cherish, I seem to myself sadly ungrateful.

"Madam," said Titbottom to Prue, solemnly, "my memory is a long and gloomy gallery, and only remotely, at its further end, do I see the glimmer of soft sunshine, and only there are the pleasant pictures hung. They seem to me very happy along whose gallery the sunlight streams to their very feet, striking all the pictured walls into unfading splendour."

Prue had laid her work in her lap, and as Titbottom paused a moment, and I turned towards her, I found her mild eyes fastened upon my face, and glistening with many tears. I knew that the tears meant that she felt herself to be one of those who seemed to Titbottom very happy.

"Misfortunes of many kinds came heavily upon the family after the head was gone. The great house was relinquished. My parents were both dead, and my grandmother had entire charge of me. But from the moment that I received the gift of the spectacles, I could not resist their fascination, and I withdrew into myself, and became a solitary boy. There were not many companions for me of my own age, and they gradually left me, or, at least, had not a hearty sympathy with me; for, if they teased me, I pulled out my spectacles and surveyed them so seriously that they acquired a kind of awe of me, and evidently regarded my grandfather's gift as a concealed magical weapon which might be dangerously drawn upon them at any moment. Whenever, in our games, there were quarrels and high words, and I began to feel about my dress and to wear a grave look, they all took the alarm, and shouted, 'Look out for Titbot-

tom's spectacles,' and scattered like a flock of scared sheep.

"Nor could I wonder at it. For, at first, before they took the alarm, I saw strange sights when I looked at them through the glasses.

"If two were quarrelling about a marble or a ball, I had only to go behind a tree where I was concealed and look at them leisurely. Then the scene changed, and it was no longer a green meadow with boys playing, but a spot which I did not recognize, and forms that made me shudder, or smile. It was not a big boy bullying a little one, but a young wolf with glistening teeth and a lamb cowering before him; or, it was a dog faithful and famishing—or a star going slowly into eclipse—or a rainbow fading—or a flower blooming—or a sun rising—or a waning moon.

"The revelations of the spectacles determined my feeling for the boys, and for all whom I saw through them. No shyness, nor awkwardness, nor silence, could separate me from those who looked lovely as lilies to my illuminated eyes. But the vision made me afraid. If I felt myself warmly drawn to any one, I struggled with the fierce desire of seeing him through the spectacles, for I feared to find him something else than I fancied. I longed to enjoy the luxury of ignorant feeling, to love without knowing, to float like a leaf upon the eddies of life, drifted now to a sunny point, now to a solemn shade—now over glittering ripples, now over gleaming calms,—and not to determined ports, a trim vessel with an inexorable rudder.

"But sometimes, mastered after long struggles, as if the unavoidable condition of owning the spectacles were using them, I seized them and sauntered into the little town. Putting them to my eyes I peered into the houses and at the people who passed me. Here sat a family at breakfast, and I stood at the window looking in. O motley meal! fantastic vision! The good mother saw her lord sitting opposite, a grave, respectable being, eating muffins. But I saw only a bank-bill, more or less crumbled and tattered, marked with

a larger or lesser figure. If a sharp wind blew suddenly, I saw it tremble and flutter; it was thin, flat, impalpable. I removed my glasses, and looked with my eyes at the wife. I could have smiled to see the humid tenderness with which she regarded her strange *vis-à-vis*. Is life only a game of blindman's-buff? of droll cross-purposes?

"Or I put them on again, and then looked at the wives. How many stout trees I saw,—how many tender flowers,—how many placid pools; yes, and how many little streams winding out of sight shrinking before the large, hard, round eyes opposite, and slipping off into solitude and shade, with a low, inner song for their own solace.

"In many houses I thought to see angels, nymphs, or, at least, women, and could only find broomsticks, mops, or kettles, hurrying about, rattling and tinkling, in a state of shrill activity. I made calls upon elegant ladies, and after I had enjoyed the gloss of silk, and the delicacy of lace, and the glitter of jewels, I slipped on my spectacles, and saw a peacock's feather, flounced, and furbelowed, and fluttering; or an iron rod, thin, sharp, and hard; nor could I possibly mistake the movement of the drapery for any flexibility of the thing draped.

"Or, mysteriously chilled, I saw a statue of perfect form, or flowing movement, it might be alabaster, or bronze, or marble,—but sadly often it was ice; and I knew that after it had shone a little, and frozen a few eyes with its despairing perfection, it could not be put away in the niches of palaces for ornament and proud family tradition, like the alabaster, or bronze, or marble statues, but would melt, and shrink, and fall coldly away in colourless and useless water, be absorbed in the earth and utterly forgotten.

"But the true sadness was rather in seeing those who, not having the spectacles, thought that the iron rod was flexible, and the ice statue warm. I saw many a gallant heart, which seemed to me brave

and loyal as the crusaders, pursuing, through days and nights, and a long life of devotion, the hope of lighting at least a smile in the cold eyes, if not a fire in the icy heart. I watched the earnest, enthusiastic sacrifice. I saw the pure resolve, the generous faith, the fine scorn of doubt, the impatience of suspicion. I watched the grace, the ardour, the glory of devotion. Through those strange spectacles how often I saw the noblest heart renouncing all other hope, all other ambition, all other life, than the possible love of some one of those statues.

"Ah me! it was terrible, but they had not the love to give. The face was so polished and smooth, because there was no sorrow in the heart,—and drearily, often, no heart to be touched. I could not wonder that the noble heart of devotion was broken, for it had dashed itself against a stone. I wept, until my spectacles were dimmed, for those hopeless lovers; but there was a pang beyond tears for those icy statues.

"Still a boy, I was thus too much a man in knowledge,—I did not comprehend the sights I was compelled to see. I used to tear my glasses away from my eyes, and, frightened at myself, run to escape my own consciousness. Reaching the small house where we then lived, I plunged into my grandmother's room, and, throwing myself upon the floor, buried my face in her lap; and sobbed myself to sleep with premature grief.

"But when I awakened, and felt her cool hand upon my hot forehead, and heard the low sweet song, or the gentle story, or the tenderly told parable from the Bible, with which she tried to soothe me, I could not resist the mystic fascination that lured me, as I lay in her lap, to steal a glance at her through the spectacles.

"Pictures of the Madonna have not her rare and pensive beauty. Upon the tranquil little islands her life had been eventless, and all the fine possibilities of her nature were like flowers that never bloomed.

Placid were all her years ; yet I have read of no heroine, of no woman great in sudden crises, that it did not seem to me she might have been. The wife and widow of a man who loved his home better than the homes of others, I have yet heard of no queen, no belle, no imperial beauty, whom in grace, and brilliancy, and persuasive courtesy, she might not have surpassed.

"Madam," said Titbottom to my wife, whose heart hung upon his story ; "your husband's young friend, Aurelia, wears sometimes a camelia in her hair, and no diamond in the ball-room seems so costly as that perfect flower, which women envy, and for whose least and withered petal men sigh ; yet, in the tropical solitudes of Brazil, how many a camelia bud drops from the bush that no eye has ever seen, which, had it flowered and been noticed, would have gilded all hearts with its memory.

"When I stole these furtive glances at my grandmother, half fearing that they were wrong, I saw only a calm lake, whose shores were low, and over which the sun hung unbroken, so that the least star was clearly reflected. It had an atmosphere of solemn twilight tranquillity, and so completely did its unruffled surface blend with the cloudless, star-studded sky, that, when I looked through my spectacles at my grandmother, the vision seemed to me all heaven and stars.

"Yet, as I gazed and gazed, I felt what stately cities might well have been built upon those shores, and have flashed prosperity over the calm, like coruscations of pearls. I dreamed of gorgeous fleets, silken-sailed, and blown by perfumed winds, drifting over those depthless waters and through those spacious skies. I gazed upon the twilight, the inscrutable silence, like a God-fearing discoverer upon a new and vast sea bursting upon him through forest glooms, and in the fervour of whose impassioned gaze, a millennial and poetic world arises, and man need no longer die to be happy.

"My companions naturally deserted me, for I had grown wearily grave and abstracted: and, unable to resist the allurements of my spectacles, I was constantly lost in the world, of which those companions were part, yet of which they knew nothing.

"I grew cold and hard, almost morose; people seemed to me so blind and unreasonable. They did the wrong thing. They called green, yellow; and black, white. Young men said of a girl, 'What a lovely, simple creature!' I looked, and there was only a glistening wisp of straw, dry and hollow. Or they said, 'What a cold, proud beauty!' I looked, and lo! a Madonna, whose heart held the world. Or they said, 'What a wild, giddy girl!' and I saw a glancing, dancing mountain stream, pure as the virgin snows whence it flowed, singing through sun and shade, over pearls and gold dust, slipping along unstained by weed or rain, or heavy foot of cattle, touching the flowers with a dewy kiss,—a beam of grace, a happy song, a line of light, in the dim and troubled landscape.

"My grandmother sent me to school, but I looked at the master, and saw that he was a smooth, round ferule, or an improper noun, or a vulgar fraction, and refused to obey him. Or he was a piece of string, a rag, a willow-wand, and I had a contemptuous pity. But one was a well of cool, deep water, and looking suddenly in, one day, I saw the stars.

"That one gave me all my schooling. With him I used to walk by the sea, and, as we strolled and the waves plunged in long legions before us, I looked at him through the spectacles, and as his eyes dilated with the boundless view, and his chest heaved with an impossible desire, I saw Xerxes and his army, tossed and glittering, rank upon rank, multitude upon multitude, out of sight, but ever regularly advancing, and with confused roar of ceaseless music, prostrating themselves in abject homage. Or, as with arms outstretched and hair streaming on the wind, he chanted full lines of the resounding Iliad, I saw

Homer pacing the Egean sands of the Greek sunsets of forgotten times.

"My grandmother died, and I was thrown into the world without resources, and with no capital but my spectacles. I tried to find employment, but everybody was shy of me. There was a vague suspicion that I was either a little crazed, or a good deal in league with the prince of darkness. My companions, who would persist in calling a piece of painted muslin, a fair and fragrant flower, had no difficulty; success waited for them around every corner, and arrived in every ship.

"I tried to teach, for I loved children. But if anything excited a suspicion of my pupils, and putting on my spectacles, I saw that I was fondling a snake, or smelling at a bud with a worm in it, I sprang up in horror and ran away; or, if it seemed to me through the glasses, that a cherub smiled upon me, or a rose was blooming in my buttonhole, then I felt myself imperfect and impure, not fit to be leading and training what was so essentially superior to myself, and I kissed the children and left them weeping and wondering.

"In despair I went to a great merchant on the island, and asked him to employ me.

"'My dear young friend,' said he, 'I understand that you have some singular secret, some charm, or spell, or amulet, or something, I don't know what, of which people are afraid. Now you know, my dear,' said the merchant, swelling up, and apparently prouder of his great stomach than of his large fortune, 'I am not of that kind. I am not easily frightened. You may spare yourself the pain of trying to impose upon me. People who propose to come to time before I arrive, are accustomed to arise very early in the morning,' said he, thrusting his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, and spreading the fingers like two fans, upon his bosom. 'I think I have heard something of your secret. You have a pair of spectacles, I believe, that you value



very much, because your grandmother brought them as a marriage portion to your grandfather. Now, if you think fit to sell me those spectacles, I will pay you the largest market price for them. What do you say?’

“I told him I had not the slightest idea of selling my spectacles.

“‘My young friend means to eat them, I suppose,’ said he, with a contemptuous smile.

“I made no reply, but was turning to leave the office, when the merchant called after me :

“‘My young friend, poor people should never suffer themselves to get into pets. Anger is an expensive luxury, in which only men of a certain income can indulge. A pair of spectacles and a hot temper are not the most promising capital for success in life, Master Titbottom.’

“I said nothing, but put my hand upon the door to go out, when the merchant said, more respectfully :

“‘Well, you foolish boy, if you will not sell your spectacles, perhaps you will agree to sell the use of them to me. That is, you shall only put them on when I direct you, and for my purposes. Hallo ! you little fool !’ cried he, impatiently, as he saw that I intended to make no reply.

“But I had pulled out my spectacles and put them on for my own purposes, and against his wish and desire. I looked at him, and saw a huge, bald-headed wild boar, with gross chaps and a leering eye—only the more ridiculous for the high-arched, gold-bowed spectacles, that straddled his nose. One of his forehoofs was thrust into the safe, where his bills receivable were hived, and the other into his pocket, among the loose change and bills there. His ears were pricked forward with a brisk, sensitive smartness. In a world where prize pork was the best excellence, he would have carried off all the premiums.

“I stepped into the next office in the street, and a mild-faced, genial man, also a large and opulent



merchant, asked me my business in such a tone, that I instantly looked through my spectacles, and saw a land flowing with milk and honey. There I pitched my tent, and stayed till the good man died, and his business was discontinued.

"But while there," said Titbottom, and his voice trembled away into a sigh, "I first saw Preciosa. Despite the spectacles, I saw Preciosa. For days, for weeks, for months, I did not take my spectacles with me. I ran away from them, I threw them up on high shelves, I tried to make up my mind to throw them into the sea, or down the well. I could not, I would not, I dared not, look at Preciosa through the spectacles. It was not possible for me deliberately to destroy them; but I awoke in the night, and could almost have cursed my dear old grandfather for his gift.

"I sometimes escaped from the office, and sat for whole days with Preciosa. I told her the strange things I had seen with my mystic glasses. The hours were not enough for the wild romances which I raved in her ear. She listened, astonished and appalled. Her blue eyes turned upon me with sweet deprecation. She clung to me, and then withdrew, and fled fearfully from the room.

"But she could not stay away. She could not resist my voice, in whose tones burnt all the love that filled my heart and brain. The very effort to resist the desire of seeing her as I saw everybody else, gave a frenzy and an unnatural tension to my feeling and my manner. I sat by her side, looking into her eyes, smoothing her hair, folding her to my heart, which was sunken deep and deep—why not for ever?—in that dream of peace. I ran from her presence, and shouted, and leaped with joy, and sat the whole night through, thrilled into happiness by the thought of her love and loveliness, like a wind-harp, tightly strung, and answering the airiest sigh of the breeze with music.

"Then came calmer days—the conviction of deep

love settled upon our lives—as after the hurrying, heaving days of spring, comes the bland and benignant summer.

“‘It is no dream, then, after all, and we are happy,’ I said to her, one day; and there came no answer, for happiness is speechless.

“‘We are happy, then,’ I said to myself, ‘there is no excitement now. How glad I am that I can now look at her through my spectacles.’

“I feared lest some instinct should warn me to beware. I escaped from her arms, and ran home and seized the glasses, and bounded back again to Preciosa. As I entered the room I was heated, my head was swimming with confused apprehensions, my eyes must have glared. Preciosa was frightened, and rising from her seat, stood with an inquiring glance of surprise in her eyes.

“But I was bent with frenzy upon my purpose. I was merely aware that she was in the room. I saw nothing else. I heard nothing. I cared for nothing, but to see her through that magic glass, and feel at once all the fulness of blissful perfection which that would reveal. Preciosa stood before the mirror, but alarmed at my wild and eager movements, unable to distinguish what I had in my hands, and seeing me raise them suddenly to my face, she shrieked with terror, and fell fainting upon the floor, at the very moment that I placed the glasses before my eyes, and beheld—*myself*, reflected in the mirror, before which she had been standing.

“Dear madam,” cried Titbottom, to my wife, springing up and falling back again in his chair, pale and trembling, while Prue ran to him and took his hand, and I poured out a glass of water—“I saw myself.”

There was silence for many minutes. Prue laid her hand gently upon the head of our guest, whose eyes were closed, and who breathed softly like an infant in sleeping. Perhaps, in all the long years of anguish since that hour, no tender hand had touched

his brow, nor wiped away the damps of a bitter sorrow. Perhaps the tender, maternal fingers of my wife soothed his weary head with the conviction that he felt the hand of his mother playing with the long hair of her boy in the soft West India morning. Perhaps it was only the natural relief of expressing a pent-up sorrow.

When he spoke again, it was with the old subdued tone, and the air of quaint solemnity.

"These things were matters of long, long ago, and I came to this country soon after. I brought with me, premature age, a past of melancholy memories, and the magic spectacles. I had become their slave. I had nothing more to fear. Having seen myself, I was compelled to see others, properly to understand my relations to them. The lights that cheer the future of other men had gone out for me; my eyes were those of an exile turned backwards upon the receding shore, and not forwards with hope upon the ocean.

"I mingled with men, but with little pleasure. There are but many varieties of a few types. I did not find those I came to clearer-sighted than those I had left behind. I heard men called shrewd and wise, and report said they were highly intelligent and successful. My finest sense detected no aroma of purity and principle; but I saw only a fungus that had fattened and spread in a night. They went to the theatres to see actors upon the stage. I went to see actors in the boxes, so consummately cunning, that others did not know they were acting, and they did not suspect it themselves.

"Perhaps you wonder it did not make me misanthropical. My dear friends, do not forget that I had seen myself. That made me compassionate, not cynical.

"Of course, I could not value highly the ordinary standards of success and excellence. When I went to church and saw a thin, blue, artificial flower, or a great sleepy cushion expounding the beauty of holiness to pews full of eagles, half-eagles, and three-

pences, however adroitly concealed they might be in broadcloth and boots : or saw an onion in an Easter bonnet weeping over the sins of Magdalen, I did not feel as they felt who saw in all this, not only propriety but piety.

“Or when at public meetings an eel stood up on end, and wriggled and squirmed lithely in every direction, and declared that, for his part, he went in for rainbows and hot water—how could I help seeing that he was still black and loved a slimy pool?

“I could not grow misanthropical when I saw in the eyes of so many who were called old, the gushing fountains of eternal youth, and the light of an immortal dawn, or when I saw those who were esteemed unsuccessful and aimless, ruling a fair realm of peace and plenty, either in their own hearts, or in another’s—a realm and princely possession for which they had well renounced a hopeless search and a belated triumph.

“I knew one man who had been for years a by-word for having sought the philosopher’s stone. But I looked at him through the spectacles and saw a satisfaction in concentrated energies, and a tenacity arising from devotion to a noble dream which was not apparent in the youths who pitied him in the aimless effeminacy of clubs, nor in the clever gentlemen who cracked their thin jokes upon him over a gossiping dinner.

“And there was your neighbour over the way, who passes for a woman who has failed in her career, because she is an old maid. People wag solemn heads of pity, and say that she made so great a mistake in not marrying the brilliant and famous man who was for long years her suitor. It is clear that no orange flower will ever bloom for her. The young people make their tender romances about her as they watch her, and think of her solitary hours of bitter regret and wasting longing, never to be satisfied.

“When I first came to town I shared this sympathy, and pleased my imagination with fancying her

hard struggle with the conviction that she had lost all that made life beautiful. I supposed that if I had looked at her through my spectacles, I should see that it was only her radiant temper which so illuminated her dress, that we did not see it to be heavy sables.

“But when, one day, I did raise my glasses, and glanced at her, I did not see the old maid whom we all pitied for a secret sorrow, but a woman whose nature was a tropic, in which the sun shone, and birds sang, and flowers bloomed for ever. There were no regrets, no doubts and half wishes, but a calm sweetness, a transparent peace. I saw her blush when that old lover passed by, or paused to speak to her, but it was only the sign of delicate feminine consciousness. She knew his love, and honoured it, although she could not understand it nor return it. I looked closely at her, and I saw that although all the world had exclaimed at her indifference to such homage, and had declared it was astonishing she should lose so fine a match, she would only say simply and quietly :

“‘If Shakespeare loved me and I did not love him, how could I marry him?’

“Could I be misanthropical when I saw such fidelity, and dignity, and simplicity?

“You may believe that I was especially curious to look at that old lover of hers, through my glasses. He was no longer young, you know, when I came, and his fame and fortune were secure. Certainly I have heard of few men more beloved, and of none more worthy to be loved. He had the easy manner of a man of the world, the sensitive grace of a poet, and the charitable judgment of a wide traveller. He was accounted the most successful and most unspoiled of men. Handsome, brilliant, wise, tender, graceful, accomplished, rich, and famous, I looked at him, without the spectacles, in surprise and admiration, and wondered how your neighbour over the way had been so entirely untouched by his homage. I watched

their intercourse in society, I saw her gay smile, her cordial greeting; I marked his frank address, his lofty courtesy. Their manner told no tales. The eager world was baulked, and I pulled out my spectacles.

"I had seen her already, and now I saw him. He lived only in memory, and his memory was a spacious and stately palace. But he did not oftenest frequent the banqueting hall, where were endless hospitality and feasting,—nor did he loiter much in the reception rooms, where a throng of new visitors was for ever swarming,—nor did he feed his vanity by haunting the apartment in which were stored the trophies of his varied triumphs,—nor dream much in the great gallery hung with pictures of his travels.

"From all these lofty halls of memory he constantly escaped to a remote and solitary chamber, into which no one had ever penetrated. But my fatal eyes, behind the glasses, followed and entered with him, and saw that the chamber was a chapel. It was dim, and silent, and sweet with perpetual incense that burned upon an altar before a picture for ever veiled. There, whenever I chanced to look, I saw him kneel and pray; and there, by day and by night, a funeral hymn was chanted.

"I do not believe you will be surprised that I have been content to remain a deputy book-keeper. My spectacles regulated my ambition, and I early learned that there were better gods than Plutus. The glasses have lost much of their fascination now, and I do not often use them. But sometimes the desire is irresistible. Whenever I am greatly interested, I am compelled to take them out and see what it is that I admire.

"And yet—and yet," said Titbottom, after a pause, "I am not sure that I thank my grandfather."

Prue had long since laid away her work, and had heard every word of the story. I saw that the dear woman had yet one question to ask, and had been earnestly hoping to hear something that would spare

her the necessity of asking. But Titbottom had resumed his usual tone, after the momentary excitement, and made no further allusion to himself. We all sat silently; Titbottom's eyes fastened musingly upon the carpet, Prue looking wistfully at him, and I regarding both.

It was past midnight, and our guest arose to go. He shook hands quietly, made his grave Spanish bow to Prue, and, taking his hat, went towards the front door. Prue and I accompanied him. I saw in her eyes that she would ask her question. And as Titbottom opened the door, I heard the low words :

"And Preciosa?"

Titbottom paused. He had just opened the door, and the moonlight streamed over him as he stood, turning back to us.

"I have seen her but once since. It was in church, and she was kneeling, with her eyes closed, so that she did not see me. But I rubbed the glasses well, and looked at her, and saw a white lily, whose stem was broken, but which was fresh, and luminous, and fragrant still."

"That was a miracle," interrupted Prue.

"Madam, it was a miracle," replied Titbottom, "and for that one sight I am devoutly grateful for my grandfather's gift. I saw, that although a flower may have lost its hold upon earthly moisture, it may still bloom as sweetly, fed by the dews of heaven."

The door closed, and he was gone. But as Prue put her arm in mine, and we went up-stairs together, she whispered in my ear :

"How glad I am that you don't wear spectacles."



## A CRUISE IN THE 'FLYING DUTCHMAN'

"When I sailed : when I sailed."

*Ballad of Robert Kidd.*

WITH the opening of spring my heart opens. My fancy expands with the flowers, and, as I walk down town in the May morning, toward the dingy counting-room, and the old routine, you would hardly believe that I would not change my feelings for those of the French Barber-Poet Jasmin, who goes, merrily singing, to his shaving and hair-cutting.

The first warm day puts the whole winter to flight. It stands in front of the summer like a young warrior before his host, and, single-handed, defies and destroys its remorseless enemy.

I throw up the chamber-window, to breathe the earliest breath of summer.

"The brave young David has hit old Goliath square in the forehead this morning," I say to Prue, as I lean out, and bathe in the soft sunshine.

My wife is tying on her cap at the glass, and, not quite disentangled from her dreams, thinks I am speaking of a street-brawl, and replies that I had better take care of my own head.

"Since you have charge of my heart, I suppose," I answer gaily, turning round to make her one of Titbottom's bows.

"But seriously, Prue, how is it about my summer wardrobe?"

Prue smiles, and tells me we shall have two months of winter yet, and I had better stop and order some more coal as I go down town.

"Winter—coal!"

Then I step back, and taking her by the arm, lead her to the window. I throw it open even wider than



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before. The sunlight streams on the great church-towers opposite, and the trees in the neighbouring square glisten, and wave their boughs gently, as if they would burst into leaf before dinner. Cages are hung at the open chamber-windows in the street, and the birds, touched into song by the sun, make Memnon true. Prue's purple and white hyacinths are in full blossom, and perfume the warm air, so that the canaries and the mocking birds are no longer aliens in the city streets, but are once more swinging in their spicy native groves.

A soft wind blows upon us as we stand, listening and looking. Cuba and the Tropics are in the air. The drowsy tune of a hand-organ rises from the square, and Italy comes singing in upon the sound. My triumphant eyes meet Prue's. They are full of sweetness and spring.

"What do you think of the summer-wardrobe now?" I ask, and we go down to breakfast.

But the air has magic in it, and I do not cease to dream. If I meet Charles, who is bound for Alabama, or John, who sails for Savannah, with a trunk full of white jackets, I do not say to them, as their other friends say :

"Happy travellers, who cut March and April out of the dismal year!"

I do not envy them. They will be sea-sick on the way. The southern winds will blow all the water out of the rivers, and, desolately stranded upon mud, they will relieve the tedium of the interval by tying with large ropes a young gentleman raving with delirium tremens. They will hurry along, appalled by forests blazing in the windy night; and, housed in a bad inn, they will find themselves anxiously asking, "Are the cars punctual in leaving?"—grimly sure that impatient travellers find all conveyances too slow. The travellers are very warm, indeed, even in March and April,—but Prue doubts if it is altogether the effect of the southern climate.

Why should they go to the South? If they only

wait a little, the South will come to them. Savannah arrives in April; Florida in May; Cuba and the Gulf come in with June, and the full splendour of the Tropics burns through July and August. Sitting upon the earth, do we not glide by all the constellations, all the awful stars? Does not the flash of Orion's scimeter dazzle as we pass? Do we not hear, as we gaze in hushed midnights, the music of the Lyre; are we not throned with Cassiopeia; do we not play with the tangles of Berenice's hair, as we sail, as we sail?

When Christopher told me that he was going to Italy, I went into Bourne's conservatory, saw a magnolia, and so reached Italy before him. Can Christopher bring Italy home? But I brought to Prue a branch of magnolia blossoms, with Mr. Bourne's kindest regards, and she put them upon her table, and our little house smelled of Italy for a week afterward. The incident developed Prue's Italian tastes, which I had not suspected to be so strong. I found her looking very often at the magnolias; even holding them in her hand, and standing before the table with a pensive air. I suppose she was thinking of Beatrice Cenci, or of Tasso and Leonora, or of the wife of Marino Faliero, or of some other of those sad old Italian tales of love and woe. So easily Prue went to Italy!

Thus the spring comes in my heart as well as in the air, and leaps along my veins as well as through the trees. I immediately travel. An orange takes me to Sorrento, and roses, when they blow, to Pæstum. The camelias in Aurelia's hair bring Brazil into the happy rooms she treads, and she takes me to South America as she goes to dinner. The pearls upon her neck make me free of the Persian gulf. Upon her shawl, like the Arabian prince upon his carpet, I am transported to the vales of Cashmere; and thus, as I daily walk in the bright spring days, I go round the world.

But the season wakes a finer longing, a desire that

could only be satisfied if the pavilions of the clouds were real, and I could stroll among the towering splendours of a sultry spring evening. Ah! if I could leap those flaming battlements that glow along the west—if I could tread those cool, dewy, serene isles of sunset, and sink with them in the sea of stars.

I say so to Prue, and my wife smiles.

"But why is it so impossible," I ask, "if you go to Italy upon a magnolia branch?"

The smile fades from her eyes.

"I went a shorter voyage than that," she answered; "it was only to Mr. Bourne's."

I walked slowly out of the house, and overtook Titbottom as I went. He smiled gravely as he greeted me, and said:

"I have been asked to invite you to join a little pleasure party."

"Where is it going?"

"Oh! anywhere," answered Titbottom.

"And how?"

"Oh! anyhow," he replied.

"You mean that everybody is to go wherever he pleases, and in the way he best can. My dear Titbottom, I have long belonged to that pleasure party, although I never heard it called by so pleasant a name before."

My companion said only:

"If you would like to join, I will introduce you to the party. I cannot go, but they are all on board."

I answered nothing; but Titbottom drew me along. We took a boat, and put off to the most extraordinary craft I had ever seen. We approached her stern, and, as I curiously looked at it, I could think of nothing but an old picture that hung in my father's house. It was of the Flemish school, and represented the rear view of the *wrouw* of a burgomaster going to market. The wide yards were stretched like elbows, and even the studding-sails were spread. The hull was seared and blistered, and, in the tops, I saw what I supposed to be strings of turnips or cabbages,

little round masses, with tufted crests; but Titbottom assured me they were sailors.

We rowed hard, but came no nearer the vessel.

"She is going with the tide and wind," said I: "we shall never catch her."

My companion said nothing.

"But why have they set the studding-sails?" asked I.

"She never takes in any sails," answered Titbottom.

"The more fool she," thought I, a little impatiently, angry at not getting nearer to the vessel. But I did not say it aloud. I would as soon have said it to Prue as to Titbottom. The truth is, I began to feel a little ill, from the motion of the boat, and remembered, with a shade of regret, Prue and peppermint. If wives could only keep their husbands a little nauseated, I am confident they might be very sure of their constancy.

But, somehow, the strange ship was gained, and I found myself among as singular a company as I have ever seen. There were men of every country, and costumes of all kinds. There was an indescribable mistiness in the air, or a premature twilight, in which all the figures looked ghostly and unreal. The ship was of a model such as I had never seen, and the rigging had a musty odour, so that the whole craft smelled like a ship-chandler's shop grown mouldy. The figures glided rather than walked about, and I perceived a strong smell of cabbage issuing from the hold.

But the most extraordinary thing of all was the sense of resistless motion which possessed my mind the moment my foot struck the deck. I could have sworn we were dashing through the water at the rate of twenty knots an hour. (Prue has a great, but a little ignorant, admiration of my technical knowledge of nautical affairs and phrases.) I looked aloft and saw the sails taut with a stiff breeze, and I heard a faint whistling of the wind in the rigging,

but very faint, and rather, it seemed to me, as if it came from the creak of cordage in the ships of Crusaders; or of quaint old craft upon the Spanish main, echoing through remote years—so far away it sounded.

Yet I heard no orders given; I saw no sailors running aloft, and only one figure crouching over the wheel. He was lost behind his great beard as behind a snow-drift. But the startling speed with which we scudded along did not lift a solitary hair of that beard, nor did the old and withered face of the pilot betray any curiosity or interest as to what breakers, or reefs, or pitiless shores, might be lying in ambush to destroy us.

Still on we swept; and as the traveller in a night-train knows that he is passing green fields, and pleasant gardens, and winding streams fringed with flowers, and is now gliding through tunnels or darting along the base of fearful cliffs, so I was conscious that we were pressing through various climates and by romantic shores. In vain I peered into the gray twilight mist that folded all. I could only see the vague figures that grew and faded upon the haze, as my eye fell upon them, like the intermittent characters of sympathetic ink when heat touches them.

Now, it was a belt of warm, odorous air in which we sailed, and then cold as the breath of a polar ocean. The perfume of new-mown hay and the breath of roses, came mingled with the distant music of bells, and the twittering song of birds, and a low surf-like sound of the wind in summer woods. There were all sounds of pastoral beauty, of a tranquil landscape such as Prue loves—and which shall be painted as the background of her portrait whenever she sits to any of my many artist friends—and that pastoral beauty shall be called England; I strained my eyes into the cruel mist that held all that music and all that suggested beauty, but I could see nothing. It was so sweet that I scarcely knew if I cared to see. The very thought of it charmed my senses and

satisfied my heart. I smelled and heard the landscape that I could not see.

Then the pungent, penetrating fragrance of blossoming vineyards was wafted across the air; the flowery richness of orange groves, and the sacred odour of crushed bay leaves, such as is pressed from them when they are strewn upon the flat pavement of the streets of Florence, and gorgeous priestly processions tread them under foot. A steam of incense filled the air. I smelled Italy—as in the magnolia from Bourne's garden—and, even while my heart leaped with the consciousness, the odour passed, and a stretch of burning silence succeeded.

It was an oppressive zone of heat—oppressive not only from its silence, but from the sense of awful, antique forms, whether of art or nature, that were sitting, closely veiled, in that mysterious obscurity. I shuddered as I felt that if my eyes could pierce that mist, or if it should lift and roll away, I should see upon a silent shore low ranges of lonely hills, or mystic figures and huge temples trampled out of history by time.

This, too, we left. There was a rustling of distant palms, the indistinct roar of beasts, and the hiss of serpents. Then all was still again. Only at times the remote sigh of the weary sea, moaning around desolate isles undiscovered; and the howl of winds that had never wafted human voices, but had rung endless changes upon the sound of dashing waters, made the voyage more appalling and the figures around me more fearful.

As the ship plunged on through all the varying zones, as climate and country drifted behind us, unseen in the gray mist, but each, in turn, making that quaint craft England or Italy, Africa and the Southern seas, I ventured to steal a glance at the motley crew, to see what impression this wild career produced upon them.

They sat about the deck in a hundred listless postures. Some leaned idly over the bulwarks, and

looked wistfully away from the ship, as if they fancied they saw all that I inferred but could not see. As the perfume, and sound, and climate changed, I could see many a longing eye sadden and grow moist, and as the chime of bells echoed distinctly like the airy syllables of names, and, as it were, made pictures in music upon the minds of those quaint mariners—then dry lips moved, perhaps to name a name, perhaps to breathe a prayer. Others sat upon the deck, vacantly smoking pipes that required no refilling, but had an immortality of weed and fire. The more they smoked the more mysterious they became. The smoke made the mist around them more impenetrable, and I could clearly see that those distant sounds gradually grew more distant, and, by some of the most desperate and constant smokers, were heard no more. The faces of such had an apathy, which, had it been human, would have been despair.

Others stood staring up into the rigging, as if calculating when the sails must needs be rent and the voyage end. But there was no hope in their eyes, only a bitter longing. Some paced restlessly up and down the deck. They had evidently been walking a long, long time. At intervals they, too, threw a searching glance into the mist that enveloped the ship, and up into the sails and rigging that stretched over them in hopeless strength and order.

One of the promenaders I especially noticed. His beard was long and snowy, like that of the pilot. He had a staff in his hand, and his movement was very rapid. His body swung forward, as if to avoid something, and his glance half turned back over his shoulder, apprehensively, as if he were threatened from behind. The head and the whole figure were bowed as if under a burden, although I could not see that he had anything upon his shoulders; and his gait was not that of a man who is walking off the *ennui* of a voyage, but rather of a criminal flying, or of a startled traveller pursued.

As he came nearer to me in his walk, I saw that



his features were strongly Hebrew, and there was an air of the proudest dignity, fearfully abased, in his mien and expression. It was more than the dignity of an individual. I could have believed that the pride of a race was humbled in his person.

His agile eye presently fastened itself upon me, as a stranger. He came nearer and nearer to me, as he paced rapidly to and fro, and was evidently several times on the point of addressing me, but, looking over his shoulder apprehensively, he passed on. At length, with a great effort, he paused for an instant, and invited me to join him in his walk. Before the invitation was fairly uttered, he was in motion again. I followed, but I could not overtake him. He kept just before me, and turned occasionally with an air of terror, as if he fancied I were dogging him; then glided on more rapidly.

His face was by no means agreeable, but it had an inexplicable fascination, as if it had been turned upon what no other mortal eyes had ever seen. Yet I could hardly tell whether it were, probably, an object of supreme beauty or of terror. He looked at everything as if he hoped its impression might obliterate some anterior and awful one; and I was gradually possessed with the unpleasant idea that his eyes were never closed—that, in fact, he never slept.

Suddenly, fixing me with his unnatural, wakeful glare, he whispered something which I could not understand, and then darted forward even more rapidly, as if he dreaded that, in merely speaking, he had lost time.

Still the ship drove on, and I walked hurriedly along the deck, just behind my companion. But our speed and that of the ship contrasted strangely with the mouldy smell of old rigging, and the listless and lazy groups, smoking and leaning on the bulwarks. The seasons, in endless succession and iteration, passed over the ship. The twilight was summer haze at the stern, while it was the fiercest winter mist at the bows. But as a tropical breath,



like the warmth of a Syrian day, suddenly touched the brow of my companion, he sighed, and I could not help saying :

"You must be tired."

He only shook his head and quickened his pace. But now that I had once spoken, it was not so difficult to speak, and I asked him why he did not stop and rest.

He turned for a moment, and a mournful sweetness shone in his dark eyes and haggard, swarthy face. It played flittingly around that strange look of ruined human dignity, like a wan beam of late sunset about a crumbling and forgotten temple. He put his hand hurriedly to his forehead, as if he were trying to remember—like a lunatic, who, having heard only the wrangle of fiends in his delirium, suddenly, in a conscious moment, perceives the familiar voice of love. But who could this be, to whom mere human sympathy was so startlingly sweet?

Still moving, he whispered with a woeful sadness, "I want to stop, but I cannot. If I could only stop long enough to leap over the bulwarks !"

Then he sighed long and deeply, and added, "But I should not drown."

So much had my interest been excited by his face and movement, that I had not observed the costume of this strange being. He wore a black hat upon his head. It was not only black, but it was shiny. Even in the midst of this wonderful scene, I could observe that it had the artificial newness of a second-hand hat; and, at the same moment, I was disgusted by the odour of old clothes—very old clothes, indeed. The mist and my sympathy had prevented my seeing before what a singular garb the figure wore. It was all second-hand and carefully ironed, but the garments were obviously collected from every part of the civilized globe. Good heavens ! as I looked at the coat, I had a strange sensation. I was sure that I had once worn that coat. It was my wedding surtout—long in the skirts—which Prue had told me, years

and years before, she had given away to the neediest Jew beggar she had ever seen.

The spectral figure dwindled in my fancy—the features lost their antique grandeur, and the restless eye ceased to be sublime from immortal sleeplessness, and became only lively with mean cunning. The apparition was fearfully grotesque, but the driving ship and the mysterious company gradually restored its tragic interest. I stopped and leaned against the side, and heard the rippling water that I could not see, and flitting through the mist, with anxious speed, the figure held its way. What was he flying? What conscience with relentless sting pricked this victim on?

He came again nearer and nearer to me in his walk. I recoiled with disgust, this time, no less than terror. But he seemed resolved to speak, and, finally, each time, as he passed me, he asked single questions, as a ship which fires whenever it can bring a gun to bear.

“Can you tell me to what port we are bound?”

“No,” I replied; “but how came you to take passage without inquiry? To me it makes little difference.”

“Nor do I care,” he answered, when he next came near enough; “I have already been there.”

“Where?” asked I.

“Wherever we are going,” he replied. “I have been there a great many times, and, oh! I am very tired of it.”

“But why are you here at all, then; and why don’t you stop?”

There was a singular mixture of a hundred conflicting emotions in his face, as I spoke. The representative grandeur of a race, which he sometimes showed in his look, faded into a glance of hopeless and puny despair. His eyes looked at me curiously, his chest heaved, and there was clearly a struggle in his mind, between some lofty and mean desire. At times, I saw only the austere suffering of ages in his

strongly-carved features, and again I could see nothing but the second-hand black hat above them. He rubbed his forehead with his skinny hand; he glanced over his shoulder, as if calculating whether he had time to speak to me; and then, as a splendid defiance flashed from his piercing eyes, so that I know how Milton's Satan looked, he said, bitterly, and with hopeless sorrow, that no mortal voice ever knew before :

"I cannot stop : my woe is infinite, like my sin !"—and he passed into the mist.

But, in a few moments, he reappeared. I could now see only the hat, which sank more and more over his face, until it covered it entirely; and I heard a querulous voice, which seemed to be quarrelling with itself, for saying what it was compelled to say, so that the words were even more appalling than what it had said before :

"Old clo' ! old clo' !"

I gazed at the disappearing figure, in speechless amazement, and was still looking, when I was tapped upon the shoulder, and, turning round, saw a German cavalry officer, with a heavy moustache, and a dog-whistle in his hand.

"Most extraordinary man, your friend yonder," said the officer; "I don't remember to have seen him in Turkey, and yet I recognize upon his feet the boots that I wore in the great Russian cavalry charge, where I individually rode down five hundred and thirty Turks, slew seven hundred, at a moderate computation, by the mere force of my rush, and, taking the seven insurmountable walls of Constantinople at one clean flying leap, rode straight into the seraglio, and, dropping the bridle, cut the sultan's throat with my bridle-hand, kissed the other to the ladies of the harem, and was back again within our lines and taking a glass of wine with the hereditary Grand Duke Generalissimo before he knew that I had mounted. Oddly enough, your old friend is now sporting the identical boots I wore on that occasion."

The cavalry officer coolly curled his moustache with his fingers. I looked at him in silence.

"Speaking of boots," he resumed, "I don't remember to have told you of that little incident of the Princess of the Crimea's diamonds. It was slight, but curious. I was dining one day with the Emperor of the Crimea, who always had a cover laid for me at his table, when he said, in great perplexity, 'Baron, my boy, I am in straits. The Shah of Persia has just sent me word that he has presented me with two thousand pearl-of-Oman necklaces, and I don't know how to get them over, the duties are so heavy.' 'Nothing easier,' replied I; 'I'll bring them in my boots.' 'Nonsense!' said the Emperor of the Crimea. 'Nonsense! yourself,' replied I, sportively: for the Emperor of the Crimea always gives me my joke; and so after dinner I went over to Persia. The thing was easily enough done. I ordered a hundred thousand pairs of boots or so, filled them with the pearls; said at the Custom-house that they were part of my private wardrobe, and I had left the blocks in to keep them stretched, for I was particular about my bunions. The officers bowed, and said that their own feet were tender, upon which I jokingly remarked that I wished their consciences were, and so in the pleasantest manner possible the pearl-of-Oman necklaces were bowed out of Persia, and the Emperor of the Crimea gave me three thousand of them as my share. It was no trouble. It was only ordering the boots, and whistling to the infernal rascals of Persian shoemakers to hang for their pay."

I could reply nothing to my new acquaintance, but I treasured his stories to tell to Prue, and at length summoned courage to ask him why he had taken passage.

"Pure fun," answered he, "nothing else under the sun. You see, it happened in this way:—I was sitting quietly and swinging in a cedar of Lebanon, on the very summit of that mountain, when suddenly,

feeling a little warm, I took a brisk dive into the Mediterranean. Now I was careless, and got going obliquely, and with the force of such a dive I could not come up near Sicily, as I had intended, but I went clean under Africa, and came out at the Cape of Good Hope, and as Fortune would have it, just as this good ship was passing. So I sprang over the side, and offered the crew to treat all round if they would tell me where I started from. But I suppose they had just been piped to grog, for not a man stirred, except your friend yonder, and he only kept on stirring."

"Are you going far?" I asked.

The cavalry officer looked a little disturbed. "I cannot precisely tell," answered he, "in fact, I wish I could;" and he glanced round nervously at the strange company.

"If you should come our way, Prue and I will be very glad to see you," said I, "and I can promise you a warm welcome from the children."

"Many thanks," said the officer,—and handed me his card, upon which I read, *Le Baron Munchausen*.

"I beg your pardon," said a low voice at my side; and, turning, I saw one of the most constant smokers—a very old man—"I beg your pardon, but can you tell me where I came from?"

"I am sorry to say I cannot," answered I, as I surveyed a man with a very bewildered and wrinkled face, who seemed to be intently looking for something.

"Nor where I am going?"

I replied that it was equally impossible. He mused a few moments, and then said slowly, "Do you know, it is a very strange thing that I have not found anybody who can answer me either of those questions. And yet I must have come from somewhere," said he, speculatively—"yes, and I must be going somewhere, and I should really like to know something about it."

"I observe," said I, "that you smoke a good deal,

and perhaps you find tobacco clouds your brain a little."

"Smoke! Smoke!" repeated he, sadly, dwelling upon the words; "why, it all seems smoke to me;" and he looked wistfully around the deck, and I felt quite ready to agree with him.

"May I ask what you are here for," inquired I; "perhaps your health, or business of some kind; although I was told it was a pleasure party?"

"That's just it," said he; "if I only knew where we were going, I might be able to say something about it. But where are you going?"

"I am going home as fast as I can," replied I warmly, for I began to be very uncomfortable. The old man's eyes half closed, and his mind seemed to have struck a scent.

"Isn't that where I was going? I believe it is; I wish I knew; I think that's what it is called. Where is home?"

And the old man puffed a prodigious cloud of smoke, in which he was quite lost.

"It is certainly very smoky," said he. "I came on board this ship to go to—in fact, I meant, as I was saying, I took passage for——" He smoked silently. "I beg your pardon, but where did you say I was going?"

Out of the mist where he had been leaning over the side, and gazing earnestly into the surrounding obscurity, now came a pale young man, and put his arm in mine.

"I see," said he, "that you have rather a general acquaintance, and, as you know many persons, perhaps you know many things. I am young, you see, but I am a great traveller. I have been all over the world, and in all kinds of conveyances; but," he continued, nervously, starting continually, and looking around, "I haven't yet got abroad."

"Not got abroad, and yet you have been everywhere?"

"Oh! yes; I know," he replied, hurriedly; "but

I mean that I haven't yet got away. I travel constantly, but it does no good—and perhaps you can tell me the secret I want to know. I will pay any sum for it. I am very rich and very young, and, if money cannot buy it, I will give as many years of my life as you require.”

He moved his hands convulsively, and his hair was wet upon his forehead. He was very handsome in that mystic light, but his eye burned with eagerness, and his slight, graceful frame thrilled with the earnestness of his emotion. The Emperor Hadrian, who loved the boy Antinous, would have loved the youth.

“But what is it that you wish to leave behind?” said I, at length, holding his arm paternally; “what do you wish to escape?”

He threw his arms straight down by his side, clenched his hands, and looked fixedly in my eyes. The beautiful head was thrown a little back upon one shoulder, and the wan face glowed with yearning desire and utter abandonment to confidence, so that, without his saying it, I knew that he had never whispered the secret which he was about to impart to me. Then, with a long sigh, as if his life were exhaling, he whispered,

“Myself.”

“Ah! my boy, you are bound upon a long journey.”

“I know it,” he replied mournfully; “and I cannot even get started. If I don't get off in this ship, I fear I shall never escape.” His last words were lost in the mist which gradually removed him from my view.

“The youth has been amusing you with some of his wild fancies, I suppose,” said a venerable man, who might have been twin brother of that snowy-bearded pilot. “It is a great pity so promising a young man should be the victim of such vagaries.”

He stood looking over the side for some time, and at length added :



"Don't you think we ought to arrive soon?"

"Where?" asked I.

"Why, in Eldorado, of course," answered he. "The truth is, I became very tired of that long process to find the Philosopher's Stone, and, although I was just upon the point of the last combination which must infallibly have produced the medium, I abandoned it when I heard Orellana's account, and found that Nature had already done in Eldorado precisely what I was trying to do. You see," continued the old man abstractedly, "I had put youth, and love, and hope, besides a great many scarce minerals, into the crucible, and they all dissolved slowly, and vanished in vapour. It was curious, but they left no residuum except a little ashes, which were not strong enough to make a lye to cure a lame finger. But, as I was saying, Orellana told us about Eldorado just in time, and I thought, if any ship would carry me there it must be this. But I am very sorry to find that any one who is in pursuit of such a hopeless goal as that pale young man yonder, should have taken passage. It is only age," he said, slowly stroking his white beard, "that teaches us wisdom, and persuades us to renounce the hope of escaping ourselves; and just as we are discovering the Philosopher's Stone, relieves our anxiety by pointing the way to Eldorado."

"Are we really going there?" asked I, in some trepidation.

"Can there be any doubt of it?" replied the old man. "Where should we be going, if not there? However, let us summon the passengers and ascertain."

So saying, the venerable man beckoned to the various groups that were clustered, ghost-like, in the mist that enveloped the ship. They seemed to draw nearer with listless curiosity, and stood or sat near us, smoking as before, or, still leaning on the side, idly gazing. But the restless figure who had first accosted me, still paced the deck, flitting in and out



of the obscurity; and as he passed there was the same mien of humbled pride, and the air of a fate of tragic grandeur, and still the same faint odour of old clothes, and the low querulous cry, "Old clo'! old clo'!"

The ship dashed on. Unknown odours and strange sounds still filled the air, and all the world went by us as we flew, with no other noise than the low gurgling of the sea around the side.

"Gentlemen," said the reverend passenger for Eldorado, "I hope there is no misapprehension as to our destination?"

As he said this, there was a general movement of anxiety and curiosity. Presently the smoker, who had asked me where he was going, said, doubtfully:

"I don't know—it seems to me—I mean I wish somebody would distinctly say where we are going."

"I think I can throw a light upon this subject," said a person whom I had not before remarked. He was dressed like a sailor, and had a dreamy eye. "It is very clear to me where we are going. I have been taking observations for some time, and I am glad to announce that we are on the eve of achieving great fame; and I may add," said he, modestly, "that my own good name for scientific acumen will be amply vindicated. Gentlemen, we are undoubtedly going into the Hole."

"What hole is that?" asked M. le Baron Munchausen, a little contemptuously.

"Sir, it will make you more famous than you ever were before," replied the first speaker, evidently much enraged.

"I am persuaded we are going into no such absurd place," said the Baron, exasperated.

The sailor with the dreamy eye was fearfully angry. He drew himself up stiffly and said:

"Sir, you lie!"

M. le Baron Munchausen took it in very good part. He smiled and held out his hand:

"My friend," said he, blandly, "that is precisely

what I have always heard. I am glad you do me no more than justice. I fully assent to your theory : and your words constitute me the proper historiographer of the expedition. But tell me one thing, how soon, after getting into the Hole, do you think we shall get out? ”

“The result will prove,” said the marine gentleman, handing the officer his card, upon which was written, *Captain Symmes*. The two gentlemen then walked aside ; and the groups began to sway to and fro in the haze as if not quite contented.

“Good God,” said the pale youth, running up to me and clutching my arm, “I cannot go into any Hole alone with myself. I should die—I should kill myself. I thought somebody was on board, and I hoped you were he, who would steer us to the fountain of oblivion.”

“Very well, that is in the Hole,” said M. le Baron, who came out of the mist at that moment, leaning upon the Captain’s arm.

“But can I leave myself outside?” asked the youth, nervously.

“Certainly,” interposed the old Alchemist ; “you may be sure that you will not get into the Hole, until you have left yourself behind.”

The pale young man grasped his hand, and gazed into his eyes.

“And then I can drink and be happy,” murmured he, as he leaned over the side of the ship, and listened to the rippling water, as if it had been the music of the fountain of oblivion.

“Drink ! drink !” said the smoking old man. “Fountain ! fountain ! Why, I believe that is what I am after. I beg your pardon,” continued he, addressing the Alchemist. “But can you tell me if I am looking for a fountain?”

“The fountain of youth, perhaps,” replied the Alchemist.

“The very thing !” cried the smoker, with a shrill laugh, while his pipe fell from his mouth, and was

shattered upon the deck, and the old man tottered away into the mist, chuckling feebly to himself, "Youth! youth!"

"He'll find that in the Hole, too," said the Alchemist, as he gazed after the receding figure.

The crowd now gathered more nearly around us.

"Well, gentlemen," continued the Alchemist, "where shall we go, or, rather, where are we going?"

A man in a friar's habit, with the cowl closely drawn about his head, now crossed himself, and whispered:

"I have but one object. I should not have been here if I had not supposed we were going to find Prester John, to whom I have been appointed father confessor, and at whose court I am to live splendidly, like a cardinal at Rome. Gentlemen, if you will only agree that we shall go there, you shall all be permitted to hold my train when I proceed to be enthroned as Bishop of Central Africa."

While he was speaking, another old man came from the bows of the ship, a figure which had been so immovable in its place that I supposed it was the ancient figure-head of the craft, and said in a low, hollow voice, and a quaint accent:

"I have been looking for centuries, and I cannot see it. I supposed we were heading for it. I thought sometimes I saw the flash of distant spires, the sunny gleam of upland pastures, the soft undulation of purple hills. Ah me! I am sure I heard the singing of birds, and the faint low of cattle. But I do not know: we come no nearer; and yet I felt its presence in the air. If the mist would only lift, we should see it lying so fair upon the sea, so graceful against the sky. I fear we may have passed it. Gentlemen," said he, sadly, "I am afraid we may have lost the island of Atlantis for ever."

There was a look of uncertainty in the throng upon the deck.

"But yet," said a group of young men in every

kind of costume, and of every country and time, "we have a chance at the Encantadas, the Enchanted Islands. We were reading of them only the other day, and the very style of the story had the music of waves. How happy we shall be to reach a land where there is no work, nor tempest, nor pain, and we shall be for ever happy."

"I am content here," said a laughing youth, with heavily matted curls. "What can be better than this? We feel every climate, the music and the perfume of every zone are ours. In the starlight I woo the mermaids, as I lean over the side, and no enchanted island will show us fairer forms. I am satisfied. The ship sails on. We cannot see but we can dream. What work or pain have we here? I like the ship; I like the voyage; I like my company, and am content."

As he spoke he put something into his mouth, and, drawing a white substance from his pocket, offered it to his neighbour, saying, "Try a bit of this lotus; you will find it very soothing to the nerves, and an infallible remedy for home-sickness."

"Gentlemen," said M. le Baron Munchausen, "I have no fear. The arrangements are well made; the voyage has been perfectly planned, and each passenger will discover what he took passage to find, in the Hole into which we are going, under the auspices of this worthy Captain."

He ceased, and silence fell upon the ship's company. Still on we swept; it seemed a weary way. The tireless pedestrians still paced to and fro, and the idle smokers puffed. The ship sailed on, and endless music and odour chased each other through the misty air. Suddenly a deep sigh drew universal attention to a person who had not yet spoken. He held a broken harp in his hand, the strings fluttered loosely in the air, and the head of the speaker, bound with a withered wreath of laurels, bent over it.

"No, no," said he, "I will not eat your lotus, nor sail into the Hole. No magic root can cure the

home-sickness I feel; for it is no regretful remembrance, but an immortal longing. I have roamed farther than I thought the earth extended. I have climbed mountains; I have threaded rivers; I have sailed seas; but nowhere have I seen the home for which my heart aches. Ah! my friends, you look very weary; let us go home."

The pedestrian paused a moment in his walk, and the smokers took their pipes from their mouths. The soft air which blew in that moment across the deck, drew a low sound from the broken harp-strings, and a light shone in the eyes of the old man of the figure-head, as if the mist had lifted for an instant, and he had caught a glimpse of the lost Atlantis.

"I really believe that is where I wish to go," said the seeker of the fountain of youth. "I think I would give up drinking at the fountain if I could get there. I do not know," he murmured, doubtfully; "it is not sure; I mean, perhaps, I should not have strength to get to the fountain, even if I were near it."

"But is it possible to get home?" inquired the pale young man. "I think I should be resigned if I could get home."

"Certainly," said the dry, hard voice of Prester John's confessor, as his cowl fell a little back, and a sudden flush burned upon his gaunt face; "if there is any chance of home, I will give up the Bishop's palace in Central Africa."

"But Eldorado is my home," interposed the old Alchemist.

"Or is home Eldorado?" asked the poet, with the withered wreath, turning towards the Alchemist.

It was a strange company and a wondrous voyage. Here were all kinds of men, of all times and countries, pursuing the wildest hopes, the most chimerical desires. One took me aside to request that I would not let it be known, but that he inferred from certain signs we were nearing Utopia. Another whispered gaily in my ear that he thought the water was gradually becoming of a ruby colour—the hue of

wine; and he had no doubt we should wake in the morning and find ourselves in the land of Cockaigne. A third, in great anxiety, stated to me that such continuous mists were unknown upon the ocean; that they were peculiar to rivers, and that, beyond question, we were drifting along some stream, probably the Nile, and immediate measures ought to be taken that we did not go ashore at the foot of the mountains of the moon. Others were quite sure that we were in the way of striking the great southern continent; and a young man, who gave his name as Wilkins, said we might be quite at ease, for presently some friends of his would come flying over from the neighbouring islands and tell us all we wished.

Still I smelled the mouldy rigging, and the odour of cabbage was strong from the hold.

O Prue, what could the ship be, in which such fantastic characters were sailing toward impossible bournes—characters which in every age have ventured all the bright capital of life in vague speculations and romantic dreams? What could it be but the ship that haunts the sea for ever, and, with all sails set, drives onward before a ceaseless gale, and is not hailed, nor ever comes to port?

I know the ship is always full; I know the gray-beard still watches at the prow for the lost Atlantis, and still the alchemist believes that Eldorado is at hand. Upon his aimless quest, the dotard still asks where he is going, and the pale youth knows that he shall never fly himself. Yet they would gladly renounce that wild chase and the dear dreams of years, could they find what I have never lost. They were ready to follow the poet home, if he would have told them where it lay.

I know where it lies. I breathe the soft air of the purple uplands which they shall never tread. I hear the sweet music of the voices they long for in vain. I am no traveller; my only voyage is to the office and home again. William and Christopher, John and Charles sail to Europe and the South, but

I defy their romantic distances. When the spring comes and the flowers blow, I drift through the year belted with summer and with spice.

With the changing months I keep high carnival in all the zones. I sit at home and walk with Prue, and if the sun that stirs the sap quickens also the wish to wander, I remember my fellow-voyagers on that romantic craft, and looking round upon my peaceful room, and pressing more closely the arm of Prue, I feel that I have reached the port for which they hopelessly sailed. And when winds blow fiercely and the night-storm rages, and the thought of lost mariners and of perilous voyages touches the soft heart of Prue, I hear a voice sweeter to my ear than that of the syrens to the tempest-tost sailor: "Thank God! Your only cruising is in the 'Flying Dutchman'!"

## FAMILY PORTRAITS

"Look here upon this picture, and on this."

*Hamlet.*

WE have no family pictures, Prue and I, only a portrait of my grandmother hangs upon our parlour wall. It was taken at least a century ago, and represents the venerable lady, whom I remember in my childhood in spectacles and comely cap, as a young and blooming girl.

She is sitting upon an old-fashioned sofa, by the side of a prim aunt of hers, and with her back to the open window. Her costume is quaint, but handsome. It consists of a cream-coloured dress made high in the throat, ruffled around the neck, and over the bosom and the shoulders. The waist is just under her shoulders, and the sleeves are tight, tighter than any of our coat sleeves, and also ruffled at the wrist. Around the plump and rosy neck, which I



remember as shrivelled and sallow, and hidden under a decent lace handkerchief, hangs, in the picture, a necklace of large ebony beads. There are two curls upon the forehead, and the rest of the hair flows away in ringlets down the neck.

The hands hold an open book: the eyes look up from it with tranquil sweetness, and, through the open window behind, you see a quiet landscape—a hill, a tree, the glimpse of a river, and a few peaceful summer clouds.

Often in my younger days, when my grandmother sat by the fire, after dinner, lost in thought—perhaps remembering the time when the picture was really a portrait—I have curiously compared her wasted face with the blooming beauty of the girl, and tried to detect the likeness. It was strange how the resemblance would sometimes start out: how, as I gazed and gazed upon her old face, age disappeared before my eager glance, as snow melts in the sunshine, revealing the flowers of a forgotten spring.

It was touching to see my grandmother steal quietly up to her portrait, on still summer mornings when every one had left the house,—and I, the only child, played, disregarded,—and look at it wistfully and long.

She held her hand over her eyes to shade them from the light that streamed in at the window, and I have seen her stand at least a quarter of an hour gazing steadfastly at the picture. She said nothing, she made no motion, she shed no tear, but when she turned away there was always a pensive sweetness in her face that made it not less lovely than the face of her youth.

I have learned since, what her thoughts must have been—how that long, wistful glance annihilated time and space, how forms and faces unknown to any other, rose in sudden resurrection around her—how she loved, suffered, struggled and conquered again; how many a jest that I shall never hear, how many a game that I shall never play, how many a song that



I shall never sing, were all renewed and remembered as my grandmother contemplated her picture.

I often stand, as she stood, gazing earnestly at the picture, so long and so silently, that Prue looks up from her work and says she shall be jealous of that beautiful belle, my grandmother, who yet makes her think more kindly of those remote old times.

"Yes, Prue, and that is the charm of a family portrait."

"Yes, again; but," says Titbottom when he hears the remark, "how, if one's grandmother were a shrew, a termagant, a virago?"

"Ah! in that case—" I am compelled to say, while Prue looks up again, half archly, and I add gravely—"you, for instance, Prue."

Then Titbottom smiles one of his sad smiles, and we change the subject.

Yet, I am always glad when Minim Sculpin, our neighbour, who knows that my opportunities are few, comes to ask me to step round and see the family portraits.

The Sculpins, I think, are a very old family. Titbottom says they date from the deluge. But I thought people of English descent preferred to stop with William the Conqueror, who came from France.

Before going with Minim, I always fortify myself with a glance at the great family Bible, in which Adam, Eve, and the patriarchs, are indifferently well represented.

"Those are the ancestors of the Howards, the Plantagenets, and the Montmorencis," says Prue, surprising me with her erudition. "Have you any remoter ancestry, Mr. Sculpin?" she asks Minim, who only smiles compassionately upon the dear woman, while I am buttoning my coat.

Then we step along the street, and I am conscious of trembling a little, for I feel as if I were going to court. Suddenly we are standing before the range of portraits.

"This," says Minim, with unction, "is Sir Solomon Sculpin, the founder of the family."

"Famous for what?" I ask, respectfully.

"For founding the family," replies Minim gravely, and I have sometimes thought a little severely.

"This," he says, pointing to a dame in hoops and diamond stomacher, "this is Lady Sheba Sculpin."

"Ah! yes. Famous for what?" I inquire.

"For being the wife of Sir Solomon."

Then, in order, comes a gentleman in a huge, curling wig, looking indifferently like James the Second, or Louis the Fourteenth, and holding a scroll in his hand.

"The Right Honourable Haddock Sculpin, Lord Privy Seal, etc., etc."

A delicate beauty hangs between, a face fair, and loved, and lost, centuries ago—a song to the eye—a poem to the heart—the Aurelia of that old society.

"Lady Dorothea Sculpin, who married young Lord Pop and Cock, and died prematurely in Italy."

Poor Lady Dorothea! whose great grandchild, in the tenth remove, died last week, an old man of eighty!

Next the gentle lady hangs a fierce figure, flourishing a sword, with an anchor embroidered on his coat-collar, and thunder and lightning, sinking ships, flames and tornadoes in the background.

"Rear Admiral Sir Shark Sculpin, who fell in the great action off Madagascar."

So Minim goes on through the series, brandishing his ancestors about my head, and incontinently knocking me into admiration.

And when we reach the last portrait and our own times, what is the natural emotion? Is it not to put Minim against the wall, draw off at him with my eyes and mind, scan him, and consider his life, and determine how much of the Right Honourable Haddock's integrity, and the Lady Dorothea's loveliness, and the Admiral Shark's valour, reappears in the modern man? After all this proving and refining, ought not

the last child of a famous race to be its flower and epitome? Or, in the case that he does not chance to be so, is it not better to conceal the family name?

I am told, however, that in the higher circles of society, it is better not to conceal the name, however unworthy the man or woman may be who bears it. Prue once remonstrated with a lady about the marriage of a lovely young girl with a cousin of Minim's; but the only answer she received was, "Well, he may not be a perfect man, but then he is a Sculpin," which consideration apparently gave great comfort to the lady's mind.

But even Prue grants that Minim has some reason for his pride. Sir Solomon was a respectable man, and Sir Shark a brave one; and the Right Honourable Haddock a learned one; the Lady Sheba was grave and gracious in her way; and the smile of the fair Dorothea lights with soft sunlight those long-gone summers. The filial blood rushes more gladly from Minim's heart as he gazes; and admiration for the virtues of his kindred inspires and sweetly mingles with good resolutions of his own.

Time has its share, too, in the ministry, and the influence. The hills beyond the river lay yesterday, at sunset, lost in purple gloom; they receded into airy distances of dreams and faëry; they sank softly into night, the peaks of the delectable mountains. But I knew, as I gazed enchanted, that the hills, so purple-soft of seeming, were hard, and gray, and barren in the wintry twilight; and that in the distance was the magic that made them fair.

So, beyond the river of time that flows between, walk the brave men and the beautiful women of our ancestry, grouped in twilight upon the shore. Distance smooths away defects, and, with gentle darkness, rounds every form into grace. It steals the harshness from their speech, and every word becomes a song. Far across the gulf that ever widens, they look upon us with eyes whose glance is tender, and which light us to success. We acknowledge our in-

heritance; we accept our birthright; we own that their careers have pledged us to noble action. Every great life is an incentive to all other lives; but when the brave heart, that beats for the world, loves us with the warmth of private affection, then the example of heroism is more persuasive, because more personal.

This is the true pride of ancestry. It is founded in the tenderness with which the child regards the father, and in the romance that time sheds upon history.

"Where be all the bad people buried?" asks every man, with Charles Lamb, as he strolls among the rank grave-yard grass, and brushes it aside to read of the faithful husband, and the loving wife, and the dutiful child.

He finds only praise in the epitaphs, because the human heart is kind; because it yearns with wistful tenderness after all its brethren who have passed into the cloud, and will only speak well of the departed. No offence is longer an offence when the grass is green over the offender. Even faults then seem characteristic and individual. Even Justice is appeased when the drop falls. How the old stories and plays teem with the incident of the duel in which one gentleman falls, and, in dying, forgives and is forgiven. We turn the page with a tear. How much better had there been no offence, but how well that death wipes it out.

It is not observed in history that families improve with time. It is rather discovered that the whole matter is like a comet, of which the brightest part is the head; and the tail, although long and luminous, is gradually shaded into obscurity.

Yet, by a singular compensation, the pride of ancestry increases in the ratio of distance. Adam was valiant, and did so well at Poitiers that he was knighted—a hearty, homely, country gentleman, who lived humbly to the end. But young Lucifer, his representative in the twentieth remove, has a tinder-

like conceit because old Sir Adam was so brave and humble. Sir Adam's sword is hung up at home, and Lucifer has a box at the opera. On a thin finger he has a ring, cut with a match fizzling, the crest of the Lucifers. But if he should be at a Poictiers, he would run away. Then history would be sorry—not only for his cowardice, but for the shame it brings upon old Adam's name.

So, if Minim Sculpin is a bad young man, he not only shames himself, but he disgraces that illustrious line of ancestors, whose characters are known. His neighbour, Mudge, has no pedigree of this kind, and when he reels homeward, we do not suffer the sorrow of any fair Lady Dorothea in such a descendant—we pity him for himself alone. But genius and power are so imperial and universal, that when Minim Sculpin falls, we are grieved not only for him, but for that eternal truth and beauty which appeared in the valour of Sir Shark, and the loveliness of Lady Dorothea. His neighbour Mudge's grandfather may have been quite as valorous and virtuous as Sculpin's; but we know of the one, and we do not know of the other.

Therefore, Prue, I say to my wife, who has, by this time, fallen as soundly asleep as if I had been preaching a real sermon, do not let Mrs. Mudge feel hurt, because I gaze so long and earnestly upon the portrait of the fair Lady Sculpin, and, lost in dreams, mingle in a society which distance and poetry immortalize.

But let the love of the family portraits belong to poetry and not to politics. It is good in the one way, and bad in the other.

The *sentiment* of ancestral pride is an integral part of human nature. Its *organization* in institutions is the real object of enmity to all sensible men, because it is a direct preference of derived to original power, implying a doubt that the world at every period is able to take care of itself.

The family portraits have a poetic significance;

but he is a brave child of the family who dares to show them. They all sit in passionless and austere judgment upon himself. Let him not invite us to see them, until he has considered whether they are honoured or disgraced by his own career—until he has looked in the glass of his own thought and scanned his own proportions.

The family portraits are like a woman's diamonds; they may flash finely enough before the world, but she herself trembles lest their lustre eclipse her eyes. It is difficult to resist the tendency to depend upon those portraits, and to enjoy vicariously through them a high consideration. But, after all, what girl is complimented when you curiously regard her because her mother was beautiful? What attenuated consumptive, in whom self-respect is yet unconsumed, delights in your respect for him, founded in honour for his stalwart ancestor?

No man worthy the name rejoices in any homage which his own effort and character have not deserved. You intrinsically insult him when you make him the scapegoat of your admiration for his ancestor. But when his ancestor is his accessory, than your homage would flatter Jupiter. All that Minim Sculpin does by his own talent is the more radiantly set and ornamented by the family fame. The imagination is pleased when Lord John Russell is Premier of England and a Whig, because the great Lord William Russell, his ancestor, died in England for liberty.

In the same way Minim's sister Sara adds to her own grace the sweet memory of the Lady Dorothea. When she glides, a sunbeam, through that quiet house, and in winter makes summer by her presence; when she sits at the piano, singing in the twilight, or stands leaning against the Venus in the corner of the room—herself more graceful—then, in glancing from her to the portrait of the gentle Dorothea, you feel that the long years between them have been lighted by the same sparkling grace, and shadowed by the same pensive smile—for this is but one Sara

and one Dorothea, out of all that there are in the world.

As we look at these two, we must own that *noblesse oblige* in a sense sweeter than we knew, and be glad when young Sculpin invites us to see the family portraits. Could a man be named Sidney, and not be a better man, or Milton, and be a churl?

But it is apart from any historical association that I like to look at the family portraits. The Sculpins were very distinguished heroes, and judges, and founders of families; but I chiefly linger upon their pictures, because they were men and women. Their portraits remove the vagueness from history, and give it reality. Ancient valour and beauty cease to be names and poetic myths, and become facts. I feel that they lived, and loved, and suffered in those old days. The story of their lives is instantly full of human sympathy in my mind, and I judge them more gently, more generously.

Then I look at those of us who are the spectators of the portraits. I know that we are made of the same flesh and blood, that time is preparing us to be placed in his cabinet and upon canvas, to be curiously studied by the grandchildren of unborn Prues. I put out my hands to grasp those of my fellows around the pictures. "Ah! friends, we live not only for ourselves. Those whom we shall never see, will look to us as models, as counsellors. We shall be speechless then. We shall only look at them from the canvas, and cheer or discourage them by their idea of our lives and ourselves. Let us so look in the portrait, that they shall love our memories—that they shall say, in turn, 'they were kind and thoughtful, those queer old ancestors of ours; let us not disgrace them.'"

If they only recognize us as men and women like themselves, they will be the better for it, and the family portraits will be family blessings.

This is what my grandmother did. She looked at her own portrait, at the portrait of her youth, with



much the same feeling that I remember Prue as she was when I first saw her ; with much the same feeling that I hope our grandchildren will remember us.

Upon those still summer mornings, though she stood withered and wan in a plain black silk gown, a close cap, and spectacles, and held her shrunk and blue-veined hand to shield her eyes, yet, as she gazed, with that long and longing glance, upon the blooming beauty that had faded from her form for ever, she recognized under that flowing hair and that rosy cheek—the immortal fashions of youth and health—and beneath those many ruffles and that quaint high waist, the fashions of the day—the same true and loving woman. If her face was pensive as she turned away, it was because truth and love are, in their essence, for ever young ; and it is the hard condition of nature that they cannot always appear so.

## OUR COUSIN THE CURATE

“Why, let the stricken deer go weep,  
The heart ungalled play ;  
For some must watch while some must sleep ;  
Thus runs the world away.”

PRUE and I have very few relations : Prue, especially, says that she never had any but her parents, and that she has none now but her children. She often wishes she had some large aunt in the country, who might come in unexpectedly with bags and bundles, and encamp in our little house for a whole winter.

“Because you are tired of me, I suppose, Mrs. Prue?” I reply with dignity, when she alludes to the imaginary large aunt.

“You could take aunt to the opera, you know, and walk with her on Sundays,” says Prue, as she knits and calmly looks me in the face, without recognizing my observation.

Then I tell Prue in the plainest possible manner that, if her large aunt should come up from the country to pass the winter, I should insist upon her bringing her oldest daughter, with whom I would flirt so desperately that the street would be scandalized, and even the corner grocery should gossip over the iniquity.

"Poor Prue, how I should pity you," I say triumphantly to my wife.

"Poor oldest daughter, how I should pity her," replies Prue, placidly counting her stitches.

So the happy evening passes, as we gaily mock each other, and wonder how old the large aunt should be, and how many bundles she ought to bring with her.

"I would have her arrive by the late train at midnight," says Prue; "and when she had eaten some supper and had gone to her room, she should discover that she had left the most precious bundle of all in the cars, without whose contents she could not sleep, nor dress, and you would start to hunt for it."

And the needle clicks faster than ever.

"Yes, and when I am gone to the office in the morning, and am busy about important affairs—yes, Mrs. Prue, important affairs," I insist, as my wife half raises her head incredulously—"then our large aunt from the country would like to go shopping, and would want you for her escort. And she would cheapen tape at all the shops, and even to the great Stewart himself, she would offer a shilling less for the gloves. Then the comely clerks of the great Stewart would look at you, with their brows lifted, as if they said, Mrs. Prue, your large aunt had better stay in the country."

And the needle clicks more slowly, as if the tune were changing.

The large aunt will never come, I know; nor shall I ever flirt with the oldest daughter. I should like to believe that our little house will teem with aunts and cousins when Prue and I are gone; but how can I

believe it, when there is a milliner within three doors, and a hair-dresser combs his wigs in the late dining-room of my opposite neighbour? The large aunt from the country is entirely impossible, and as Prue feels it, and I feel it, the needles seem to click a dirge for that late lamented lady.

“But at least we have one relative, Prue.”

The needles stop: only the clock ticks upon the mantel to remind us how ceaselessly the stream of time flows on that bears us away from our cousin the curate.

When Prue and I are most cheerful, and the world looks fair—we talk of our cousin the curate. When the world seems a little cloudy, and we remember that though we have lived and loved together, we may not die together—we talk of our cousin the curate. When we plan little plans for the boys and dream dreams for the girls—we talk of our cousin the curate. When I tell Prue of Aurelia whose character is every day lovelier—we talk of our cousin the curate. There is no subject which does not seem to lead naturally to our cousin the curate. As the soft air steals in and envelopes everything in the world, so that the trees, and the hills, and the rivers, the cities, the crops, and the sea, are made remote, and delicate, and beautiful, by its pure baptism, so over all the events of our little lives, comforting, refining, and elevating, falls like a benediction the remembrance of our cousin the curate.

He was my only early companion. He had no brother, I had none: and we became brothers to each other. He was always beautiful. His face was symmetrical and delicate; his figure was slight and graceful. He looked as the sons of kings ought to look: as I am sure Philip Sidney looked when he was a boy. His eyes were blue, and as you looked at them, they seemed to let your gaze out into a June heaven. The blood ran close to the skin, and his complexion had the rich transparency of light. There was nothing gross or heavy in his expression or texture; his soul seemed to have mastered his

body. But he had strong passions, for his delicacy was positive, not negative: it was not weakness, but intensity.

There was a patch of ground about the house which we tilled as a garden. I was proud of my morning-glories, and sweet peas; my cousin cultivated roses. One day—and we could scarcely have been more than six years old—we were digging merrily and talking. Suddenly there was some kind of difference; I taunted him, and, raising his spade, he struck me upon the leg. The blow was heavy for a boy, and the blood trickled from the wound. I burst into indignant tears, and limped toward the house. My cousin turned pale and said nothing, but just as I opened the door, he darted by me, and before I could interrupt him, he had confessed his crime, and asked for punishment.

From that day he conquered himself. He devoted a kind of ascetic energy to subduing his own will, and I remember no other outbreak. But the penalty he paid for conquering his will, was a loss of the gushing expression of feeling. My cousin became perfectly gentle in his manner, but there was a want of that pungent excess, which is the finest flavour of character. His views were moderate and calm. He was swept away by no boyish extravagance, and, even while I wished he would sin only a very little, I still adored him as a saint. The truth is, as I tell Prue, I am so very bad because I have to sin for two—for myself and our cousin the curate. Often, when I returned panting and restless from some frolic, which had wasted almost all the night, I was rebuked as I entered the room in which he lay peacefully sleeping. There was something holy in the profound repose of his beauty, and, as I stood looking at him, how many a time the tears have dropped from my hot eyes upon his face, while I vowed to make myself worthy of such a companion, for I felt my heart owing its allegiance to that strong and imperial nature.

My cousin was loved by the boys, but the girls

worshipped him. His mind, large in grasp, and subtle in perception, naturally commanded his companions, while the lustre of his character allured those who could not understand him. The asceticism occasionally showed itself a vein of hardness, or rather of severity in his treatment of others. He did what he thought it his duty to do, but he forgot that few could see the right so clearly as he, and very few of those few could so calmly obey the least command of conscience. I confess I was a little afraid of him, for I think I never could be severe.

In the long winter evenings I often read to Prue the story of some old father of the church, or some quaint poem of George Herbert's—and every Christmas Eve, I read to her Milton's Hymn of the Nativity. Yet, when the saint seems to us most saintly, or the poem most pathetic or sublime, we find ourselves talking of our cousin the curate. I have not seen him for many years; but, when we parted, his head had the intellectual symmetry of Milton's, without the puritanic stoop, and with the stately grace of a cavalier.

Such a boy has premature wisdom—he lives and suffers prematurely.

Prue loves to listen when I speak of the romance of his life, and I do not wonder. For my part, I find in the best romance only the story of my love for her, and often as I read to her, whenever I come to what Titbottom calls "the crying part," if I lift my eyes suddenly, I see that Prue's eyes are fixed on me with a softer light by reason of their moisture.

Our cousin the curate loved, while he was yet a boy, Flora, of the sparkling eyes and the ringing voice. His devotion was absolute. Flora was flattered, because all the girls, as I said, worshipped him; but she was a gay, glancing girl, who had invaded the student's heart with her audacious brilliancy, and was half surprised that she had subdued it. Our cousin—for I never think of him as *my* cousin, only—wasted away under the fervour of his passion. His

life exhaled as incense before her. He wrote poems to her, and sang them under her window, in the summer moonlight. He brought her flowers and precious gifts. When he had nothing else to give, he gave her his love in a homage so eloquent and beautiful that the worship was like the worship of the wise men. The gay Flora was proud and superb. She was a girl, and the bravest and best boy loved her. She was young, and the wisest and truest youth loved her. They lived together, we all lived together, in the happy valley of childhood. We looked forward to manhood as island-poets look across the sea, believing that the whole world beyond is a blest Araby of spices.

The months went by, and the young love continued. Our cousin and Flora were only children still, and there was no engagement. The elders looked upon the intimacy as natural and mutually beneficial. It would help soften the boy and strengthen the girl; and they took for granted that softness and strength were precisely what were wanted. It is a great pity that men and women forget that they have been children. Parents are apt to be foreigners to their sons and daughters. Maturity is the gate of Paradise, which shuts behind us; and our memories are gradually weaned from the glories in which our nativity was cradled.

The months went by, the children grew older, and they constantly loved. Now Prue always smiles at one of my theories; she is entirely sceptical of it; but it is, nevertheless, my opinion, that men love most passionately, and women most permanently. Men love at first and most warmly; women love last and longest. This is natural enough; for nature makes women to be won, and men to win. Men are the active, positive force, and, therefore, they are more ardent and demonstrative.

I can never get farther than that in my philosophy, when Prue looks at me, and smiles me into scepticism of my own doctrines. But they are true, notwithstanding.

My day is rather past for such speculations; but so long as Aurelia is unmarried, I am sure I shall indulge myself in them. I have never made much progress in the philosophy of love; in fact, I can only be sure of this one cardinal principle, that when you are quite sure two people cannot be in love with each other, because there is no earthly reason why they should be, then you may be very confident that you are wrong, and that they are in love, for the secret of love is past finding out. Why our cousin should have loved the gay Flora so ardently was hard to say; but that he did so, was not difficult to see.

He went away to college. He wrote the most eloquent and passionate letters; and when he returned in vacations, he had no eyes, ears, nor heart for any other being. I rarely saw him, for I was living away from our early home, and was busy in a store—learning to be book-keeper—but I heard afterward from himself the whole story.

One day when he came home for the holidays, he found a young foreigner with Flora—a handsome youth, brilliant and graceful. I have asked Prue a thousand times why women adore soldiers and foreigners. She says it is because they love heroism and are romantic. A soldier is professionally a hero, says Prue, and a foreigner is associated with all unknown and beautiful regions. I hope there is no worse reason. But if it be the distance which is romantic, then, by her own rule, the mountain which looked to you so lovely when you saw it upon the horizon, when you stand upon its rocky and barren side, has transmitted its romance to its remotest neighbour. I cannot but admire the fancies of girls which make them poets. They have only to look upon a dull-eyed, ignorant, exhausted *roué*, with an impudent moustache, and they surrender to Italy, to the tropics, to the splendours of nobility, and a court life—and——

“Stop,” says Prue, gently; “you have no right to say ‘girls’ do so, because some poor victims have



been deluded. Would Aurelia surrender to a bleary-eyed foreigner in a moustache? ”

Prue has such a reasonable way of putting these things !

Our cousin came home and found Flora and the young foreigner conversing. The young foreigner had large, soft, black eyes, and the dusky skin of the tropics. His manner was languid and fascinating, courteous and reserved. It assumed a natural supremacy, and you felt as if here were a young prince travelling before he came into possession of his realm.

It is an old fable that love is blind. But I think there are no eyes so sharp as those of lovers. I am sure there is not a shade upon Prue's brow that I do not instantly remark, nor an altered tone in her voice that I do not instantly observe. Do you suppose Aurelia would not note the slightest deviation of heart in her lover, if she had one? Love is the coldest of critics. To be in love is to live in a crisis, and the very imminence of uncertainty makes the lover perfectly self-possessed. His eye constantly scours the horizon. There is no footfall so light that it does not thunder in his ear. Love is tortured by the tempest the moment the cloud of a hand's size rises out of the sea. It foretells its own doom ; its agony is past before its sufferings are known.

Our cousin the curate no sooner saw the tropical stranger, and marked his impression upon Flora, than he felt the end. As the shaft struck his heart, his smile was sweeter, and his homage even more poetic and reverential. I doubt if Flora understood him or herself. She did not know, what he instinctively perceived, that she loved him less. But there are no degrees in love ; when it is less than absolute and supreme, it is nothing. Our cousin and Flora were not formally engaged, but their betrothal was understood by all of us as a thing of course. He did not allude to the stranger ; but as day followed day, he saw with every nerve all that passed. Gradually

—so gradually that she scarcely noticed it—our cousin left Flora more and more with the soft-eyed stranger, whom he saw she preferred. His treatment of her was so full of tact, he still walked and talked with her so familiarly, that she was not troubled by any fear that he saw what she hardly saw herself. Therefore, she was not obliged to conceal anything from him or from herself; but all the soft currents of her heart were setting toward the West Indian. Our cousin's cheek grew paler, and his soul burned and wasted within him. His whole future—all his dream of life—had been founded upon his love. It was a stately palace built upon the sand, and now the sand was sliding away. I have read somewhere, that love will sacrifice everything but itself. But our cousin sacrificed his love to the happiness of his mistress. He ceased to treat her as peculiarly his own. He made no claim in word or manner that everybody might not have made. He did not refrain from seeing her, or speaking of her as of all his other friends; and, at length, although no one could say how or when the change had been made, it was evident and understood that he was no more her lover, but that both were the best of friends.

He still wrote to her occasionally from college, and his letters were those of a friend, not of a lover. He could not reproach her. I do not believe any man is secretly surprised that a woman ceases to love him. Her love is a heavenly favour won by no desert of his. If it passes, he can no more complain than a flower when the sunshine leaves it.

Before our cousin left college, Flora was married to the tropical stranger. It was the brightest of June days, and the summer smiled upon the bride. There were roses in her hand and orange flowers in her hair, and the village church bell rang out over the peaceful fields. The warm sunshine lay upon the landscape like God's blessing, and Prue and I, not yet married ourselves, stood at an open window in the old meeting-house, hand in hand, while the young

couple spoke their vows. Prue says that brides are always beautiful, and I, who remember Prue herself upon her wedding-day—how can I deny it? Truly, the gay Flora was lovely that summer morning, and the throng was happy in the old church. But it was very sad to me, although I only suspected then what now I know. I shed no tears at my own wedding, but I did at Flora's, although I knew she was marrying a soft-eyed youth whom she dearly loved, and who, I doubt not, dearly loved her.

Among the group of her nearest friends was our cousin the curate. When the ceremony was ended, he came to shake her hand with the rest. His face was calm, and his smile sweet, and his manner unconstrained. Flora did not blush—why should she?—but shook his hand warmly, and thanked him for his good wishes. Then they all sauntered down the aisle together; there were some tears with the smiles among the other friends; our cousin handed the bride into her carriage, shook hands with the husband, closed the door, and Flora drove away.

I have never seen her since; I do not even know if she be living still. But I shall always remember her as she looked that June morning, holding roses in her hand, and wreathed with orange flowers. Dear Flora! it was no fault of hers that she loved one man more than another: she could not be blamed for not preferring our cousin to the West Indian: there is no fault in the story, it is only a tragedy.

Our cousin carried all the collegiate honours—but without exciting jealousy or envy. He was so really the best, that his companions were anxious he should have the sign of his superiority. He studied hard, he thought much, and wrote well. There was no evidence of any blight upon his ambition or career, but after living quietly in the country for some time, he went to Europe and travelled. When he returned, he resolved to study law, but presently relinquished it. Then he collected materials for a history, but suffered them to lie unused. Somehow the mainspring was

gone. He used to come and pass weeks with Prue and me. His coming made the children happy, for he sat with them, and talked and played with them all day long, as one of themselves. They had no quarrels when our cousin the curate was their playmate, and their laugh was hardly sweeter than his as it rang down from the nursery. Yet sometimes, as Prue was setting the tea-table, and I sat musing by the fire, she stopped and turned to me as we heard that sound, and her eyes filled with tears.

He was interested in all subjects that interested others. His fine perception, his clear sense, his noble imagination, illuminated every question. His friends wanted him to go into political life, to write a great book, to do something worthy of his powers. It was the very thing he longed to do himself; but he came and played with the children in the nursery, and the great deed was undone. Often, in the long winter evenings, we talked of the past, while Titbottom sat silent by, and Prue was busily knitting. He told us the incidents of his early passion—but he did not moralize about it, nor sigh, nor grow moody. He turned to Prue, sometimes, and jested gently, and often quoted from the old song of George Withers, I believe :

“ If she be not fair for me,  
What care I how fair she be ? ”

But there was no flippancy in the jesting; I thought the sweet humour was no gayer than a flower upon a grave.

I am sure Titbottom loved our cousin the curate, for his heart is as hospitable as the summer heaven. It was beautiful to watch his courtesy toward him, and I do not wonder that Prue considers the deputy book-keeper the model of a high-bred gentleman. When you see his poor clothes, and thin, gray hair, his loitering step, and dreamy eye, you might pass him by as an inefficient man; but when you hear his voice always speaking for the noble and generous

side, or recounting, in a half-melancholy chant, the recollections of his youth; when you know that his heart beats with the simple emotion of a boy's heart, and that his courtesy is as delicate as a girl's modesty, you will understand why Prue declares that she has never seen but one man who reminded her of our especial favourite, Sir Philip Sidney, and that his name is Titbottom.

At length our cousin went abroad again to Europe. It was many years ago that we watched him sail away, and when Titbottom, and Prue, and I, went home to dinner, the grace that was said that day was a fervent prayer for our cousin the curate. Many an evening afterward, the children wanted him, and cried themselves to sleep calling upon his name. Many an evening still, our talk flags into silence as we sit before the fire, and Prue puts down her knitting and takes my hand, as if she knew my thoughts, although we do not name his name.

He wrote us letters as he wandered about the world. They were affectionate letters, full of observation, and thought, and description. He lingered longest in Italy, but he said his conscience accused him of yielding to the syrens; and he declared that his life was running uselessly away. At last he came to England. He was charmed with everything, and the climate was even kinder to him than that of Italy. He went to all the famous places, and saw many of the famous Englishmen, and wrote that he felt England to be his home. Burying himself in the ancient gloom of a university town, although past the prime of life, he studied like an ambitious boy. He said again that his life had been wine poured upon the ground, and he felt guilty. And so our cousin became a curate.

"Surely," wrote he, "you and Prue will be glad to hear it; and my friend Titbottom can no longer boast that he is more useful in the world than I. Dear old George Herbert has already said what I would say to you, and here it is :

“ ‘ I made a posy, while the day ran by :  
 Here will I smell my remnant out, and tie  
     My life within this band.  
 But time did beckon to the flowers, and they  
 My noon most cunningly did steal away,  
     And wither'd in my hand.

‘ My hand was next to them, and then my heart ;  
 I took, without more thinking, in good part,  
     Time's gentle admonition ;  
 Which did so sweetly death's sad taste convey,  
 Making my mind to smell my fatal day,  
     Yet sugaring the suspicion.

‘ Farewell, dear flowers, sweetly your time ye spent,  
 Fit, while ye lived, for smell or ornament,  
     And after death for cures ;  
 I follow straight without complaints or grief,  
 Since if my scent be good, I care not if  
     It be as short as yours.’ ”

This is our only relation ; and do you wonder that, whether our days are dark or bright, we naturally speak of our cousin the curate ? There is no nursery longer, for the children are grown ; but I have seen Prue stand, with her hand holding the door, for an hour, and looking into the room now so sadly still and tidy, with a sweet solemnity in her eyes that I will call holy. Our children have forgotten their old playmate, but I am sure if there be any children in his parish, over the sea, they love our cousin the curate, and watch eagerly for his coming. Does his step falter now, I wonder ; is that long, fair hair, gray ; is that laugh as musical in those distant homes as it used to be in our nursery ; has England, among all her good and great men, any man so noble as our cousin the curate ?

The great book is unwritten ; the great deeds are undone ; in no biographical dictionary will you find the name of our cousin the curate. Is his life, therefore, lost ? Have his powers been wasted ?

I do not dare to say it ; for I see Bourne, on the pinnacle of prosperity, but still looking sadly for his castle in Spain ; I see Titbottom, an old deputy

book-keeper, whom nobody knows, but with his chivalric heart, loyal to whatever is generous and humane, full of sweet hope, and faith, and devotion; I see the superb Aurelia, so lovely that the Indians would call her a smile of the Great Spirit, and as beneficent as a saint of the calendar—how shall I say what is lost, or what is won? I know that in every way, and by all His creatures, God is served and His purposes accomplished. How should I explain or understand, I who am only an old book-keeper in a white cravat?

Yet in all history, in the splendid triumphs of emperors and kings, in the dreams of poets, the speculations of philosophers, the sacrifices of heroes, and the ecstasies of saints, I find no exclusive secret of success. Prue says she knows that nobody ever did more good than our cousin the curate, for every smile and word of his is a good deed; and I, for my part, am sure that, although many must do more good in the world, nobody enjoys it more than Prue and I.





# LOTUS-EATING



TO  
CHARLES A. DANA  
THE LETTERS  
ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR  
ARE NOW  
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO THE FRIEND



# LOTUS-EATING

## THE HUDSON AND THE RHINE

*July: Newburgh on the Hudson.*

WHERE could a man meet the summer more pleasantly than in the fragrant silence of a garden whence have emanated the most practical and poetic suggestions toward the greater dignity, comfort and elegance of country life? If the aspect of our landscape yearly improves, in the beauty of the houses, and in tasteful and picturesque rural treatment, our enjoyment of it will be an obligation to Mr. Downing.

Not four days away from the city, I have not yet done roaming, bewildered with the summer's breath, through the garden, smelling of all the flowers, and returning to lie upon the lawn, and bask, dreaming, in the July sun. What a cold word is "beautiful" to express the ecstasy which, in some choice moments of midsummer, suddenly overwhelms your mind, like an unexpected and exquisite thought.

I found a few late spring-flowers this morning, upon the lawn, and welcomed them with Robert Herrick's "Greeting to the Violets":

“ Welcome, maids of honour,  
    You do bring  
    In the Spring,  
And wait upon her.  
She has virgins many,  
    Fresh and fair ;  
    Yet you are  
More sweet than any.  
You're the Maiden Posies,  
    And so graced  
    To be placed  
'Fore damask roses.

Yet though thus respected,  
By-and-by,  
You do lie,  
Poor girls, neglected."

As I lay repeating these lines, whose melody is as delicate as the odour of the flowers they sing, I saw the steamer, crowded with passengers, hurrying away from the city. For none more than the Americans make it a principle to desert the city, and none less than Americans know how to dispense with it. So we compromise by taking the city with us, and the country gently laughs us to scorn.

Although the day was tropical, on which we left New York, the *Reindeer* ran with us as if we had been mere Laplanders, and our way a frozen plain, instead of the broad, blue river. It is only in the steamer that the Hudson can be truly perceived and enjoyed. In the Indian summer, the western shore, seen from the railroad, is a swiftly unrolling panorama of dreams; yet the rush, and roar, and sharp steam-shriek would have roused Rip Van Winkle himself, and the dust would have choked and blinded him as he opened his eyes. The railroad will answer to deliver legislators at Albany, although which "side up" is a little uncertain. But the traveller who loves the law of beauty and pursues pleasure, will take the steamer and secure silence, cleanliness, sufficient speed, and an unencumbered enjoyment of the landscape.

If the trains are as thronged as the boats, they do well. It was curious to set forth upon a river-excursion, surrounded by hundreds bent upon similar summer pleasures, and yet see no red hand-book and no state-travelling carriage upon the forward deck, with a state-travelling countenance of an English milord on the inside, and the ruddy, round cheeks of state-travelling Abigails, in the rumble behind. These are Rhenish reminiscences. But they are as much part of a journey up the Rhine as Drachenfels or St. Goar.



John Bull, upon his travels, is an old joke, as well to himself as others; and the amusement is never exhausted. Yet he is the boldest and best of travellers. He carries bottled ale to Nineveh, and black tea to the top of Mont Blanc, and haunts Norwegian rivers with the latest improved angling "flies"; but he carries integrity, heroism, and intelligence, also. His patriotism amounts to prejudice; yet, if there is any cosmopolitan, it is John Bull. He takes pride, indeed, in asserting his prejudices, and insisting upon his black tea everywhere and in all societies. But his sublime scepticism of any excellence out of England is pleasanter than our crude mixture of boastfulness and subserviency. It was remarkable during the revolutions of 1848, in Europe, that there were no monarchists so absolute as the Americans. They declared, almost to a man, that Europe was not fit for republicanism. As if time would ripen republics from despotism, so that, like mellow pears, they would fall off without any confusion; or as if it were the habit of kings to educate their subjects to dispense with royalty.

But it is still very amusing to see how the English patronize the continent. They ascend the Rhine imperturbably. They evidently feel that they are conferring much more honour upon the landscape by looking at it, than ever the landscape can give them pleasure. This annual overflow of the continent with Cockneys is the point of Thackeray's "Kickleburys on the Rhine"—a picture whose breadth is hardly broader than the reality, and which requires you to be a traveller fully to enjoy.

This was the pith of my chat with Willow as we sped along under the Palisades, and threaded the Highlands.

Of course these comparisons soon led to the grand question which usually consumes the three hours from Murray-street to West Point—the comparative claims of interest in the rivers themselves.

The first day upon the Rhine is an epoch in the

traveller's memory. I came out of the Tyrol through Southern Germany to Heidelberg, and on a brilliant July morning took the steamer at Mayence for Boppard, a few miles above Coblenz, and not far below St. Goar. It was a soft, windless day. I lay in the very bow of the boat, with a Scotch boy going home for the summer from his school in Zurich. All day he buzzed in my ears stories of Switzerland and Scotland, and through his words I saw the misty and snowy grandeur of each. Our way was straight over the gleaming river, by the open spaces of Nassau and the sunny slopes of the vineyards of the Schloss Johannisberger, through the narrow pass of Bingen, where the Highlands of the Rhine begin,—and under the Rudesheimer vines and the little castles, it still wound onward, every mile revealing the picture which fancy had so plainly seen, until in the late afternoon I stepped ashore at Boppard.

On the other side of the river were the ruins of the twin castles of "The Brothers," which every reader of Bulwer's "Pilgrims of the Rhine" remembers, and crossing in a small boat at twilight, we climbed the conical hills and rambled and stumbled by moonlight among the ruins. The feeling of that evening was of the nameless sadness which is always born of moonlight in spots of romantic association. Yet it would not be possible to experience precisely the same thing upon any other than that river. The Rhine has its own character, its own romance; and Uhland's ballad with which I accompanied the slow dip of the oars, as at midnight we rowed homewards, is the music and the meaning of the Rhine.

"Many a year is in its grave  
Since I crossed the restless wave,  
And the evening, fair as ever,  
Shines on ruin, rock, and river.

Then, in this same boat, beside,  
Sat two comrades, old and tried;  
One with all a father's truth,  
One with all the fire of youth.

One on earth in silence wrought,  
And his grave in silence sought,  
But the younger, brighter form,  
Passed in battle and in storm.

So whene'er I turn my eye  
Back upon the days gone by,  
Saddening thoughts of friends come o'er me,  
Friends, who closed their course before me.

Yet what binds us friend to friend  
But that soul with soul can blend?  
Soul-like were those hours of yore :  
Let us walk in soul once more !

Take, O boatman, thrice thy fee :  
Take, I give it willingly,  
For, invisible to thee,  
Spirits twain have crossed with me."

A few evenings afterward I was standing with a fellow-countryman upon the terrace of the castle of Heidelberg, looking out toward the glorious opening of the Neckar valley upon the plain of the Rhine, and was severely taken to task by him for my indiscreet Rhenish raptures and absolute light-speaking of the Hudson.

"Of course you don't prefer the Rhine !" exclaimed my friend with patriotic ire.

I contemplated the height of the terrace from the ground, and accommodated my answer to it.

"Yes ! ' for this night only ' I think I do. But I have no doubt I shall sleep it off. I am sure I shall be better in the morning."

"Strange words they seemed of slight and scorn,  
My true-love sighed for sorrow,  
And looked me in the face, to think  
I thus could speak of Yarrow."

I did not sleep it off, however, that night, at least, for a day or two afterward I returned to the Rhine, and in my friend's absence carried the question clear against the Hudson.

The difference between the rivers is that of the countries. The Rhine is a narrow belt of turbid water winding among the vineyards that wall it upon

each side. In its beautiful reach between Bingen and Bonn, the only beautiful part of the river, except near Lake Constance, it has no shores but vineyarded hillsides, and occasionally a narrow grain field in front of them. There are no trees, no varieties of outline, and the vines, regularly planted and kept short for wine, not left to luxuriate at length, for beauty, are a little formal in their impression. The castles—the want of which is so lamented upon the Hudson shores—are not imposing, but romantic. They are rather small and toy-like, and stand like small sentries upon small hills commanding the entrances to small valleys.

But they are interesting enough to make their own traditions, even better than those you read in Murray's red-book : and the mass of travellers who merely pass in the steamers, when the white glare of noon hardens the hills, as if they were sullen, and would not reveal their charms to a hasty stare, can have but faint idea of the tranquil and romantic beauty of the river.

A river is the coyest of friends. You must love it and live with it before you can know it.

“ And you must love him, ere to you  
He will seem worthy of your love.”

The Rhine, after all, is the theme and mistress of romance and song—although to many of us, that fame be only traditional. The Rhine songs, both those which directly celebrate its beauty, and those which are ballads of life upon its banks, are among the most sonorous in the songful German literature.

It is the Rhine wine, pure Rhenish, the blood of the life that blooms along these monotonous hillsides, which is the wine poetic, that routs all the temperance societies. The foliage of the vine itself is fair and lustrous. It wreathes the hot hills with a gorgeous garland, and makes the day upon the Rhine a festival. Then the old crumbling castles, if vague in fame, are so much the more suggestive, and from one

shattered buttress to another, miles away on a distant hilltop, the gay vine-garland sweeps, alive now, as much as ever, and by the vivid contrast softens the suggestion and deepens the delight.

Near St. Goar you glide under the rock of the Lorelei. Henry Heine in one of his tender songs relates its mournful tradition, which is the most beautiful and wildest of the Rhine. Willow and Xtopher and I sing it nightly as we lie on the lawn here, watching the moonlight streaming upon the river, and to-day Xtopher has translated it without letting the aroma escape. The first line of the last verse is hard to render. The verb in German expresses the river embracing the boat and sailor, like a serpent in its folds.

"I know not what it presages,  
This heart with sadness fraught,  
'T is a tale of the olden ages,  
That will not from my thought.

The air grows cool and darkles,  
The Rhine flows calmly on,  
The mountain summit sparkles  
In the light of the setting sun.

There sits in soft reclining  
A maiden wondrous fair,  
With golden raiment shining,  
And combing her golden hair.

With a comb of gold she combs it,  
And combing, low singeth she,  
A song of a strange, sweet sadness,  
A wonderful melody.

The sailor shudders as o'er him  
The strain comes floating by,  
He sees not the cliffs before him,  
He only looks on high.

Ah! round him the dark waves flinging  
Their arms, draw him slowly down,—  
And this with her wild, sweet singing  
The Lorelei has done."

Mendelssohn was to have written an opera upon this story and had already commenced it, but the

king of Prussia, who is fond of the classics, ordered the composer, who was the royal director of music, to write an overture and choruses for the *Antigone*. We have lost in that opera the companion of *Don Giovanni*; in a different kind, of course, for Mozart was all melody, and Mendelssohn had only rhythm. In his music the melody is like a faint perfume in a dreamy south wind. How long must we wait for another Fine-ear to detect and interpret those weird melodies of the Lorelei?

These are the genuine delights of the Rhine. They are those of romantic association and suggestion. They are those which are only possible in an old and storied country. It is not what you see there, but what you feel through what you see, that charms you. The wild grape in our woods is pleasant from the association with the Rhenish vineyards, and they in turn from their association with the glory of the grape in all literature and tradition. The Rhine is a lyric, or a ballad.

Avoid the steamer, if you can, and in some country market-boat float at evening or morning along its shores, following the wildest whim of fancy, with Uhland in one pocket and a *flasche* of Rudesheimer in the other, dozing away the noon in the coolest corner of some old ruin, and dreaming of Ariadne as you drift, sighing, beneath the moonlighted vineyards. Then you, too, will exasperate some chance friend at Heidelberg, and believe in the Rhine, for that night only.

I know that romance is in the poet's heart, and not in the outward forms he sees. But there is a technical material of romance—the moonlight, a ruin, an Italian girl, for instance—which is useful in begetting a romantic mood of mind, as a quotation will often suggest verses that haunt you all day long. And it is in this material that the Rhine is so rich.

The Hudson, however, is larger and grander. It is not to be devoured in detail. No region without association, is, except by science. But its spacious

and stately character, its varied and magnificent outline, from the Palisades to the Catskill, are as epical as the loveliness of the Rhine is lyrical. The Hudson implies a continent behind. For vineyards it has forests. For a belt of water, a majestic stream. For graceful and grain-goldened heights it has imposing mountains. There is no littleness about the Hudson, but there is in the Rhine. Here everything is boldly touched. What lucid and penetrant lights,



what broad and sober shadows ! The river moistens the feet, and the clouds anoint the heads, of regal hills. The Danube has, in parts, glimpses of such grandeur. The Elbe has sometimes such delicately pencilled effects. But no European river is so lordly in its bearing, none flows in such state to the sea.

Of all our rivers that I know, the Hudson, with this grandeur, has the most exquisite episodes. Its morning and evening reaches are like the lakes of dreams. Looking from this garden, at twilight, toward the huge hills, enamelled with soft darkness, that guard the entrance of the Highlands, near West Point, I "would be a merman bold," to float on the

last ray through that mysterious gate to the softest shadow in Cro' Nest, where, if I *were* a merman bold, I should know the culprit fay was sleeping. Out of that dim portal glide the white sails of sloops, like spectres: they loiter languidly along the bases of the hills, as the evening breeze runs after them, enamoured, and they fly, taking my fascinated eyes captive, far and far away, until they glimmer like ghosts and strand my sight upon the distance.

These tranquil evening reveries are the seed of such beautiful and characteristic harvests as the Hudson tales of the *Sketch Book* and *Knickerbocker's History*. And rubbing those golden grains upon his eyes, Darley has so well perceived the spirit of the river, that in a few simple forms, in the vignette of his illustrations of Rip Van Winkle, he has seized its suggestion and made it visible. Nor will any lover of the Hudson forget its poet, Joseph Rodman Drake, who in his "Culprit Fay" shows that the spirits of romance and beauty haunt every spot upon which falls the poetic eye. If a man would touch the extremes of experience in a single day, I know not how it could be better done, than by stepping upon a steamer, after a long bustling morning in Wall-street, and reading the "Culprit Fay" by moonlight upon the piazza of the hotel at West Point, looking up the river to Cro' Nest.

It was a happy fortune for the beauty of the river that steam did not drive away the sails. It was feared that the steamers would carry all the freight, and so bereave the river of the characteristic and picturesque life of the white-sailed sloops. But economy was on the side of beauty this time, and it was found cheaper to carry heavy freights by sail, as of old. So the sloops doze and dream along, very beautiful to behold from the banks, and sometimes, awakened as they enter the Highlands by a sudden stoop from some saucy gust coquetting with the hills, they bend and dip, and come crowding toward us through the grim mountain gate, like a troop of



white-winged pilgrims fluttering and flying from the Castle of Giant Despair.

You see I have heard the Hudson syrens : perhaps some faint, far-off strain of that lullaby of silence that soothed old Rip to his mountain nap. And while I smell Florida and the Tropics, as I sit under the branching magnolia, it goes clear and clean against the Rhine. But when, leaving the garden, and sitting under the foliaged trellises of the piazza, we see the moon rise over the opposite mountains—the ghost of the summer day—drawing the outline of the Warwick vase more delicately in shadow upon the sward than ever the skilful artist carved it in marble, then a glimpse of Grecian beauty penetrates and purifies the night ; while, within doors, Willow's hands dream upon the keys of the piano, and singing, sad and sweet enough to silence the Lorelei, completes the discomfiture of the Rhine.

In the moonlight and the music Xtopher and I are but

“ Such stuff as dreams are made of,”

until

“ From tower on tree-top high,  
The sentry elf his call has made,  
A streak is in the eastern sky,  
Shapes of moonlight ! flit and fade !  
The hill-tops gleam in morning's spring,  
The sky-lark shakes his dappled wing,  
The day-glimpse glimmers on the lawn,  
The cock has crowed and the fays are gone ! ”

## CATSKILL

*July: The Mountain House.*

THE *New World* is a filagree frame-work of white wood surrounding a huge engine, which is much too conspicuous. I am speaking, by the bye, of the Hudson steamer ; and yet, perhaps, the symbol

holds for the characteristic expression of the nation. For just so flimsy and overfine are our social arrangements, our peculiarities of manner and dress, and just so prominent and evident is the homely practical genius that carries us forward, with steam-speed, through the sloop-sluggishness of our compeers.

A sharp-faced, thought-furrowed, hard-handed American, with his anxious eye and sallow complexion, his nervous motion and concentrated expression, and withal, accoutred for travelling in blue coat with gilt buttons, dark pantaloons, patent leather boots, and silk vest hung with charms, chains, and bits of metal, as if the Indian love of lustre lingered in the Yankee, is not unlike one of these steamers, whose machinery, driving it along, jars the cut glass and the choice centre-tables and crimson-covered lounges, and with a like accelerated impetus, would shiver the flagree into splinters.

Yet for all this the *New World* is a very pleasant place. It has a light, airy, open and clean deck, whence you may spy the shyest nook of scenery upon the banks, and a spacious cabin, where you do not dine at a huge table, with eager men plunging their forks into dishes before you, and their elbows into your sides, but quietly and pleasantly as at a Parisian café. What an appalling ordeal an American table d'hôte is! What a chaos of pickles, puddings and meats! and each man plunging through everything as if he and the steamer were racing for victory. The waiters, usually one third the necessary number, rush up and down the rear of the benches, and cascades of gravies and sauces drip ominously along their wake. It is the seed-time of dyspepsia, and Dickens in that anti-American novel, which none of us can read without feeling its injustice, has yet described, only too well, an American ordinary.

Who can wonder that we are lantern-jawed, lean, sickly and serious of aspect, when he has dined on a steamer or at a great business hotel? We laugh very loftily at the Rhine dinners in which the pud-

ding and fish meet in the middle of the courses. But a Rhine dinner upon the open, upper deck of the steamer, is quiet and orderly and inoffensive, while one of our gregarious repasts must needs offend every man who has some regard for proprieties and some self-respect.

—And Catskill?

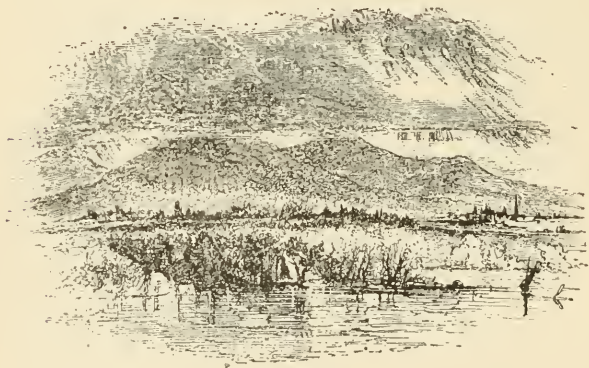
Yes, we are rapidly approaching, even while we sit on deck and our eyes slide along the gentle green banks, as we meditate American manners and the extremes that meet in our characteristics. Beyond Poughkeepsie a train darts along the shore, rattling over the stones on the water's edge, and rolling with muffled roar behind the cuts and among the heavy foliage. So nearly matched is our speed, that until the locomotive ran beside us, I did not know how rapid was our silent movement. But there is heat and bustle and dust in the nervous little train, which winds along, like a jointed reptile, while with our stately steamer there is silence, and the cool, constant patter of the few drops, where our sharp prow cuts the river.

A little above Poughkeepsie the river bends, and the finest point is gained. It is a foreground of cultivated and foliaged hills of great variety of outline, rising as they recede, and ranging, and towering at last along the horizon, in the Catskill mountains. It was a brilliant day, and the heavy, rounding clouds piled in folds along the line of the hills—taking, at length, precisely their own hue, and so walling up the earth with a sombre, vaporous rampart, such as Titans and fallen angels storm. As we glided nearer, keen flashes darted from the wall of cloud, and as if riven and rent with its sharpness, the heavy masses rolled asunder; then more heavily piled themselves in dense darkness, fold overlying fold, while the startled wind changed, and rushed down the river, chilled, and breathing cold before the storm.

No longer a wall, but a swiftly advancing and devastating power, the storm threw up pile upon pile

of jagged blackness into the clear, tender blue of the afternoon, and there was a wail in the hurried gusts that swept past us and over us, and the river curled more and more into sudden waves, which were foam-tipped, and scattered spray.

We were now abreast of the mountains, and far behind them the storm had burst. Down the vast ravines that opened outward toward the river, I saw the first softness of the shower skimming along the distant hillsides, moister and grayer, until they were merged in mist. Deep into those solemn mountain forests leaped the lightning, and the echo of its



wrathful roar surged and boomed among the hills, and dashed far up the cliffs and dark hemlock slopes, and crashed over the gurgling brooks, where was none to hear but the trees and the streams, and they were undismayed, and in the shuddering breeze of the pauses the trees rustled and whispered to the streams, and the streams laughed to themselves—the strange, sweet, mystical laughter that Undine laughed.

“They roll their nine-pins still, among the Catskill,” said Olde.

“And there’s a ten-strike,” interposed Swansdowne, as a mighty bolt burst among the hills, but

still toward the inner valleys, for the slope toward the river yet stood in cold, dark, purple distinctness.

The breeze was cool and strong as we landed at Catskill. We were huddled ashore rapidly, the board was pulled in, and the *New World* disappeared. I proposed riding up to the Mountain House on the outside of the coach, but Olde smiled and said, "I shall go inside."

Now Olde loves scenery as well as any man, poet or painter, but he holds that a drenching rain destroys both the beauty of the scene and the capacity for enjoyment of the seer, and while I stood with my hand upon the door, my common-sense thoroughly convinced, as well by his action as by his words, but my carnal heart lusting after the loveliness of the cloud-crowned and shower-veiled mountains, there came another ten-strike that suddenly shook a cloud to pieces over our heads and down it came.

"I think I shall go inside, too," I said, as I stumbled up the steps and closed the door.

During the first eight miles of the inland drive toward the Mountain House, I enjoyed the prospect of six travellers, four stained leather curtains, and the two wooden windows of the door. It was not cool inside the coach, but without, the wind was in high frolic with the rain, and through the slightest crevice the wily witch dashed us with her missiles, cold and very wet. Then the showers swept along a little, and we threw up the curtains and breathed fresh air, and about three miles from the Mountain House, where the steep ascent commences, Olde and Swansdowne and I jumped out of the stage and walked. The road is very firmly built, and is fortunate in its material of a slaty rock, and in the luxuriance of foliage, for the tangled tree-roots hold the soil together.

The road climbs at first in easy zigzags, and presently pushes straight on through the woods, and upon the side of a steep ravine; the level-branched foliage sheering regularly down, sheeting the moun-

tain side with leafy terraces. Between the trunks and down the gorges we looked over a wide but mountainous landscape, and as we ascended, the air became more invigorating with the greater height and the coolness of the shower. Two hours before sunset we stood upon the plateau before the Mountain House, 2,800 feet above the sea.

There is a fine sense of height there, but all mountain views over a plain are alike. You stand on the piazza of the Mountain House and look directly down into the valley of the Hudson, with only a foreground, deep beneath you, of a lower layer than that on which you stand, with its precipice of pine and hemlock. The rest stretches then, a smooth surface to the eye, but hilly enough to the feet, when you are there, to an unconfined horizon at the north and south, and easterly to the Berkshire hills.

Through this expanse lies the Hudson, not very sinuous, but a line of light dividing the plain. In the vague twilight atmosphere it was very effective. Sometimes the mist blotted out individual outlines, and the whole scene was but a silver-gray abyss, and the hither line of the river was the horizon, and the stream itself a white gleam of sky beyond. Then the distance and the foreground were mingled in the haze, a shining opaque veil, wherein the river was a rent, through which beamed a remote brightness. Or the vapours clustered toward the south and the stream flowed into them, flashing and far, as into a terrene cloud-land. All the country was chequered with yellow patches of ripe grain, and marked faintly with walls and fences, and looked rather a vast domain than a mountain-ruled landscape.

Whoever is familiar with mountain scenery will know what to anticipate in the Catskill view. The whole thing is graceful and generous, but not sublime. Your genuine mountaineer (which I am not) shrugs his shoulder at the shoulders of mountains which soar thousands of feet above him and are

still shaggy with forest. He draws a long breath over the spacious plain, but he feels the want of that true mountain sublimity, the presence of lonely snow-peaks.

And as we always require in scenery of a similar class, similar emotions, there is necessarily a little disappointment in the Catskill. They are hills rather than mountains. But, as they have the fame of mountains, you are recalling your Alpine impressions, all the way up. It is not very wise, perhaps, but it is very natural and rather unavoidable. Yet, when the night falls, the silence and coolness of your lofty home impart the genuine mountain tone to your thoughts. Then you begin to acknowledge the family resemblance, and to remember Switzerland.

When I was on the Faulhorn, the highest point in Europe upon which a dwelling-house is placed, and that inhabited for three months only in the year, I stepped out in the middle of the night, and as I looked across the valley of Grindelwald and saw the snow-fields and ice-precipices of all the *Horns*—never trodden and never to be trodden by man—shining cold in the moonlight, my heart stood still as I felt that those awful peaks and I were alone in the solemn solitude. Then I felt the significance of Switzerland, and knew the sublimity of mountains.

And do you remember, said Olde, how delicately the dawn touched those sunmits with cool, bright fingers, and how their austerity burned and blushed under that caressing, until the sunrise overwhelmed them with rosy flame, and they flashed perfect day far over Switzerland; and hours afterward, when day was old upon the mountain-tops, how gentlemen-travellers turned in their beds in the valley inns, and said, "Hallo, Tom, the sun is rising"?

The Mountain House is really unceremonious. You are not required to appear at dinner in ball costume, and if you choose, you may scramble to the Falls in cowhide boots and not in varnished pumps.



The house has a long and not ill-proportioned Corinthian colonnade, wooden of course, and glaring white. The last point, however, is a satisfaction from below, for its vivid contrast with the dark green forest reveals the house from a great distance upon the river. The table is well supplied, but Olde and Swansdowne were forced to throw themselves upon the compassion of the chambermaid, (I would say *Femme-de-Chambre*, if a single eye, slopping shoes, and a thick, cotton handkerchief pinned night-cap-wise over the head, would possibly allow that suggestive word,) and to submit that a towel of the magnitude of a small *mouchoir*, (they did not say *mouchoir*,) was not large allowance for two full-grown men. The dame's answer had gravity and instance.

"Gentlemen, how can I give you what we have not?"

A written placard around the house announced that dancing music could be had at the bar. But none wished to polk—and how music could be made in that parlour, which seemed to have been dislocated by some tempestuous mountain ague, remains a mystery to me. There are eight windows, and none of them opposite to any of the others; folding-doors which have gone down the side of the room in some wild architectural dance, and have never returned, and a row of small columns stretching in an independent line across the room, quite irrespective of the middle. It is a dangerous parlour for a nervous man.

We sat on the edge of the precipice, looking off into the black abyss of night. Swansdowne told wild tales of crazy men in lonely nooks of Scotland, and Olde talked of Italy. They were pleasant days, he said, which shall return no more.

"My eyes are full of childish tears,  
My heart is idly stirred,  
For the same sound is in my ears,  
That in those days I heard.



Thus fares it still in our decay,  
And yet the wiser mind  
Mourns less for what age takes away  
Than what it leaves behind."

## CATSKILL FALLS

*July.*

I DID not see the sun rise from the Catskill. Therefore my more cunning way would be to give you a florid history of all the sunrises that I have seen from famous places, omitting mention of the chills, yawns, and, in general, very ameliorated admiration of such early spectacles.

Quite unwittingly I was conscious of no sunrise that bright Sunday morning upon the Catskill; yet I was not scornful of it but only sleepy.

Not scornful, for still flashes along the heights of memory many a Swiss sunrise. That of the Righi, for instance, with the groups of well-whiskered Englishmen and well-booted Americans, gathered upon the Culm, and wrapt in coats, cloaks, blankets, and comforters—as if each had arisen, bed and all, and had so stepped out to enjoy the spectacle. A wooden horn was blown, much vague sentiment was uttered, and the exceeding absurdity of the crowd interfered with the grandeur of the moment.

But beyond these and above them were the peaks of the Mid-Alps, celestial snow-fields, smooth and glittering as the sky, and the rugged glaciers sloping into unknown abysses, Niagaran cataracts frozen in foam for ever. There were lesser mountains in the undulating mass of the panorama, green and graceful, or angular with sharp cliffs, sheering perpendicularly away, or gently veering into the glassy calmness of cold lakes, in which the night had bathed and left its blackness. There was the range of the

Jura, dusky and far, and the faint flash of the Aar in the morning mist, and among these awful mountains, and upon them, spots of fame, poetic and patriotic, each one the home of a thousand traditions, each the melody of myriad household songs. It was the region of William Tell all around me.

The keen, cool breath of early morning smote me, as with the heroic spirit of the story, and the sentiments and memories of the spot brightened into significance with the increasing dawn. And as we stood there, too shivering to be sentimental—for the breath which lives “with death and morning on the silver horns,” blew every feeling away that was not genuine and fair—far over the hushed tumult of peaks which thronged to the utmost east, came the sun, sowing those sublime snow-fields with glorious day. The light leaped from peak to peak, the only thing alive, glad and gay, worthy to sport with those worthy mates, until the majestic solemnity of the moment yielded to the persuasive warmth of day, and our hearts yearned for the valley.

Do you remember in Tennyson’s “Princess,” the “small, sweet idyl,” which she read?

“Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height ;  
What pleasure lives in height, (the shepherd sang,)  
In height and cold, the splendour of the hills?  
But cease to move so near the heavens, and cease  
To glide a sunbeam by the blasted pine,  
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire ;  
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,  
For Love is of the valley, come thou down  
And find him ; by the happy threshold, he,  
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,  
Or red with spirted purple of the vats,  
Or fox-like in the vine ; nor cares to walk  
With Death and Morning on the Silver Horns,  
Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,  
Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,  
That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls,  
To roll the torrent out of dusky doors :  
But follow ; let the torrent dance thee down  
To find him in the valley ; let the wild  
Lean-headed eagles yelp alone, and leave

The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill  
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,  
That like a broken purpose waste in air :  
So waste not thou : but come ; for all the vales  
Await thee ; azure pillars of the hearth  
Arise to thee ; the children call, and I  
Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,  
Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet ;  
Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the lawn,  
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,  
And murmuring of innumerable bees."

Remembering these things, when I came down and found Olde and Swansdowne under the Corinthian colonnade, I did not feel as if I had seen nothing, although I had lost the Catskill sunrise, which, they told me, was a magnificent effect of slanting light over a level floor of fleecy clouds, much more magnificent, indeed, than any polar ocean could be, except those that poets see.

It was a clear, crystal morning ; and after breakfast those who were disposed, repaired to the village of Catskill, twelve miles away, to church. I believe there were not very many. Some of the rest of us looked mountainward. The more distant hills—for there are none lost in mist so far as to seem *most* distant—were sharply drawn, purply cold, and rounded with foliage up the sides. Over the summit we went, and down the purple glen, toward the throbbing heart of the Catskill.

"And on that morning thro' the grass,  
And by the steaming rills,  
We travelled merrily to pass  
A day among the hills."

The road to the Falls is most unromantically distinguishable. A coach load was to follow, but we scorned coaches—mighty mountaineers that we were ! and went cheerily along past the lake, dark and cold enough to have a dreary tradition, while the vibrant, liquidly-gurgling song of the wood-thrush poured through the trees, and a solitary, flaming golden-rod nodded autumn to us as we passed. It is a walk

through the woods—a wood-road to a finger-post that says curtly, “To the Falls”; and then down into a dell to a very new and very neat white house and a bar-room, with a balcony over the abyss.

The proprietor of the bar-room is also the genius of the Fall, and drives a trade both with his spirits and his water. In fact, if your romantic nerves can stand the steady truth, the Catskill Fall is *turned on* to accommodate poets and parties of pleasure.

The process of “doing” the sight, for those who are limited in time, is very methodical. You leave the hotel and drive in a coach to the bar-room. You “refresh.” You step out upon the balcony, and look into the abyss. The proprietor of the Fall informs you that the lower plunge is eighty feet high. It appears to you to be about ten. You laugh incredulously—he smiles in return the smile of a *mens conscia recti*. “Would you step down and have the water turned on?” You do step down a somewhat uneven but very safe staircase. You reach the bottom. “Look! now it comes!” and the proud cascade plunges like a freed force into the air and slips, swimming in foam, away from your gaze.

You would gladly stay all day. But the sage of the party looks at his watch—remembers dinner—deems it time to think of returning; and you climb the staircase—step upon the balcony—throw a last look into the abyss—down the blue mistiness of the winding valley whose repose leads your thought far into eternal silence and summer, and mounting the coach you are boxed up again and delivered at the Mountain House just as the dinner-bell rings.

This is ludicrous. But most of us are really only shop-keepers, and natural spectacles are but shop-windows on a great scale. People love the country theoretically, as they do poetry. Very few are heroic enough to confess that it is wearisome, even when they are fatigued by it. The reason of which reluctance I suppose to be a lurking consciousness that we ought to love it, that we ought to be satisfied and

glad among the hills and under the trees, and that if we are not, it is because the city has corrupted us—because the syren has sung away our strength. The distaste which many clever persons feel for Wordsworth may often be traced to a want of sympathy with his intense and personal enjoyment of nature. It is incredible to them, and seems inflated if not false.

This want of direct pleasure and exhilaration in nature is a matter of regret, as would be the want of love for flowers. A man who has it is never friendless. The wildest or rarest day flushing the landscape with its own character, is his companion and his counsellor. "The mountains are a feeling," the streams are books that babble without nonsense, and the coming and going of the year, as he marks it upon the budding and fading leaf, is the swelling and dying of celestial music in his heart. Happily no man is always insensible. He cannot always escape the electrical shock of natural grandeur and beauty. A noble landscape, a cataract, a mountain, impresses him imperially, but as vaguely and blindly as a great hero surprises pedlers and pettifoggers.

Olde and Swansdowne and I, citizens too, descended the perpendicular staircase to the rock pavement, which, hollowed into a basin in the centre, receives the first long fall. You may picture the general effect of the scene from below by fancying a mountain stream followed up the natural valley between two mountains, until it is checked by an abrupt rocky precipice, stretching from one hillside to the other directly across the ravine, and half-concavely pointing down the valley. Directly over the centre of the parapet of this rocky wall flows the Fall. At first it is only the surplus of a dammed mill-stream, (I beg pardon,) but beyond the mill and the dam, nature has claimed her own again, and reels the slight stream away, a thread of airy silver, wreathing into rainbow spray.

Indeed, so slight is the Fall, when not turned on,

but only dripping through the gate, that there is but a single shoot of watery arrows in Indian file, an appearance which any observer of cascades will understand. It is about the volume of the Swiss Staubbach, when it has fallen some four hundred of its nine hundred feet toward the green lawns of Lauterbrunnen, which it moistens as spray and never reaches as a fall, except during a "spell of weather," the dissolution of spring, or some other time unseen of Dr. Syntax, and the hunters of the picturesque.

The first effect of the Catskill Falls is very simple and beautiful. Seen from the highest platform, after you have descended and are looking up, it has a quiet grandeur, even, which declines into picturesqueness when you pass below the second broken fall that pours away into the gorge, whence it steals off, singing, between the heavily wooded hillsides. The great rock, over which flows the first fall, is hollowed out, a little above the level of the basin into which it plunges, and you can walk, stooping a little, quite around and behind the thin, flickering fall. It has a delicate spray of its own, too, when the wind scatters it into the sunlight which touches it into diamond dust; and very gracious was the sun that morning, for when, after our arrival below, the coaches arrived above, and the parties descended, the ladies glided and shrank along under the rock—a motley troop of white ladies of Avenel, if you will, except that for her the fall parted, and she did not stoop but droop—and as they came around, where the wind had waved the cascade in spray to cool them, the sun flashed suddenly from behind the fleecy clouds, and arched them with a rainbow. What could the Catskill do more for them, since it could not part like the Fall of Avenel, and frame them in living silver, as they passed beneath?

They all came down to the level of the second fall, and there, clustered upon the rocks, we awaited the "turning on," or rather the artificial spring and imitative effects of snow-melting upon the moun-

tains, produced by our friend of the "Refreshment Saloon," whose little building perched upon the cliff, at the very point of the fall, with its friendly basket far overhanging the ravine upon an outstretched pole, like that of an old well, is extremely effective and recalls vaguely those desert convents from whose high walls hang baskets, the sole communication with the world, except through posterns bolted and barred.

The fall swelled suddenly, and in a moment, a downward volley of flashing arrows of light plunged into the basin beneath. It flaked into spray as it fell, and sheeted the basin near it with foam, and the mist steamed up into the concave abyss, and clouded it, as if to veil the fall in its most majestic moment. It was of the same character still, but developed into fulness; and the second fall, pouring over a crescent of rock brilliantly greened with grass and light foliage, and of picturesquely broken outline, overflowed at crevices and points unseen before, and a graceful group of rills danced attendance upon each side of the chief fall.



Down to the basin of this we descended, and commanded both cascades. But my pen commands no colours, and the neutral tint of words will not glow with the flashing water and the rich, serious green of the banks of foliage, nor seize the movement of the clouds—June clouds, that swam fleecily backward directly over the cascade, adding the sympathy of motion in the moist blue sky to that of the falling



water. This was a rare and exquisite effect. The round, white clouds hung low, and as they swept swiftly backward, seemed to pass through the very narrow dent of rock which the cascade had worn, as if its own spray had curled into compact clouds, and was so hurrying back again to feed the fountain.

The groups of loiterers exhausted words but not delight, and after resting a little upon the rocks, climbed the cliff again homeward. We lingered below. Swansdowne with rapid pencil was tracing the general outline of the appearance of the full fall. Olde and I were lying at length gossiping of Switzerland, and watching the shifting splendours of the day, and the fall, as the gate was closed, gradually dwindled, wasting from that full-bodied maturity, and sinking again into infantine weakness and uncertainty.

There is a feeling of life in moving water, and the poets call it *living* water, when it flows freshly and clear. Therefore, we could not watch it, as if pining away, without a little regret, not at the loss of our own pleasure, but at its loss of life. Its song in the ravine behind us grew fainter, subsiding at last into a uniform, gentle gurgling. Whether a solitary in a slouched hat upon the hillside below us, with tablets in hand, was measuring that murmur into verse I shall never know. But certainly the music of the song I shall never forget.

Sunday stillness brooded over the day. Sweet and sacred it was like the memory of George Herbert, and his was the hymn we sang that Sunday at the Catskill Falls.

“Sweet day ! so cool, so calm, so bright ;  
The bridal of the earth and sky :  
The dew shall weep thy fall to-night ;  
For thou must die.

Sweet rose ! whose hue, angry and brave,  
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye ;  
Thy root is ever in its grave ;—  
And thou must die.



Sweet Spring ! full of sweet days and roses ;  
A box where sweets compacted lie ;  
My music shows ye have your closes :—  
And all must die.

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,  
Like seasoned timber never gives :  
But, though the whole world turn to coal,  
Then chiefly lives."

We walked down the stream for a mile afterwards, and I advise every one to do the same, crossing at the usual place, and stumbling over the rocks a little at first, but at last pushing smoothly on. The path leads you to a pleasant opening where the water polishes a broad pavement, and where bits of the picturesque abound. With his delicately sensitive artistic eye, Swansdowne glanced among the trees, and from time to time, announced "a Kensett," as a broad bit of mossed rock, or a shapely stretch of trees with the mountain outline beyond, recalled the poetic accuracy and characteristic subjects of that artist.

And so, finding the stones, poems and pictures, as well as sermons, we voted, of course, to finish the day at the Fall. A neat and well-cooked dinner in the very small and clean new house near the picturesque bar-room, (seen from below,) consoled us for the loss of the Mountain House ordinary, and, as we dined, a wind furious enough for November, a very cataract of a wind, dashed and swept along the mountain-sides, and Swansdowne and I did privately shiver, (it was the 20th of July,) until we sallied forth and climbed down the rock again to the first platform.

The water was unchained for us, and the lilies in the extremest depths of the ravine that grow beyond the edge of the usual flowing, were folded once more before sunset in its crystal caresses. The western light streaming up the ravine was of tenderer tone than that of morning, and our thoughts grew tenderer too. Our chat was of Italy now, no longer of

Switzerland, and the tranquil sunset closed over a day that will sing as pleasantly through memory as the stream through the solitary dell.

“To-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new.”

## TRENTON

*July.*

IN Longfellow's delicious proem to the “Waif,” he invokes the singing of a song of rest. Sometimes, urges the poet, let us escape the battle cry and the bugle call, and repose that we may the better wrestle.

“Such songs have power to quiet  
The restless pulse of care,  
And come like the benediction  
That follows after prayer.”

Trenton is that summer song of rest.

Only lovely images haunt its remembrance, beautiful as the Iris which, in some happy moment of the ramble through the ravine, spans the larger or lesser fall. Beauty and grace are its praises. You hear them from those who are either hurrying to the grandeur of Niagara, or from those who, returning, step aside at Utica to enjoy the music of the greater cataract, softened here at Trenton into an exquisite echo.

It matters little when you see these Falls, whether before or after Niagara. The charm of Trenton is unique, and you will not scorn the violets and lilies because you knelt to the passion-flowers and roses. In the prime of a summer which, from the abundant rains, is singularly unworn and unwithered, a day at Trenton, because of its rare and picturesque, but harmonious, attractions, is like a feast of flowers. In some choice niche of memory you will lay it aside, not as a sublime statue nor a prophetic and solemn

picture, but as a vase most delicate, symmetrical if slight, and chased with pastoral tracery.

From Albany—its Campagna-like suburbs once passed—a pleasant day made pleasant pictures of the broad, rich, tranquil landscape. The country gained, possibly, in tenderness of aspect that I glanced at it in the intervals of reading Hawthorne's "Seven Gables," and as the heat increased, the monotonous clatter of the cars grew soothing as the airy harpsichord of the fair Alice, dead centuries ago, and persuaded my mind into Clifford's vague and dreamy mood. Floating thus along the fascinating verge of slumber, I opened my eyes upon the placid picturesqueness of the actual landscape, and anon closed them to behold, instantly, the enchanted scenery of sleep. It was a meet approach to Trenton, a passage through a dream-frescoed corridor, pierced with windows that looked into the real world. In every garden, as we hurried on, wherever was an old tree and a hint of the "moated grange," (they are not many on that railroad,) I looked to see the soft-souled Clifford, Alice Pyncheon, and the high-hearted Hepzibah, seated in the shadow and wondering at the world.

But when the petulant bell rang two o'clock at Utica, dreams vanished, and I emerged into a crowded and confused station, and was whirled among porters, luggage, barrows, rival coachmen, bells, gongs, and steam, to the hotel. The regular coach to Trenton had left upon the arrival of the preceding train, but there were several white-hatted individuals of extremely conciliatory and persuasive manners, who launched instantly into extravagant praises of various stages, wagons, and other carriages, all offering the most delightful and easy method of reaching the Falls.

But it was singular to an inquiring mind to remark that whenever you descended to particulars, as to hours, and numbers, and carriages, these romances instantly reeled away into the most astonishing

vagueness, and while you fancied one moment that you heard the noise of the fall, the next it was a very indistinguishable and quite inaudible object in the vista of a prolonged perspective. The fact was that these men who manifested so laudable an interest in your getting to Trenton, comfortably and speedily, wished only to secure your promise to go, and would "arrange" afterward. Remember that when you come, and act accordingly.

It was clear that nothing could be done until after dinner, which was dispatched, and while I quietly consumed a noxious weed, and patiently awaited my prospects, a short, thick-set, English-looking gentleman crossed the passage and suggested to my fancy that "Two horsemen might have been seen slowly mounting a hill." But before I proceeded further in the natural reflections of the moment, my co-Trentonians appeared in the shape of a party of twelve; just a coach-load with their luggage, and my own coach-prospects began to dwindle dolefully. Then came the tug of war, and truly "no pent-up Utica" contracted the powers of those rival coach-agents, for I never heard so sharp a struggle for a freight.

The landlord was forced to interfere, while I and the "two horsemen" stood aside,—I, for my part, wincing at every moment of the tranquil summer afternoon wasted from Trenton. Presently there was a lull in the war, but no victory, and when a quiet man led me quietly aside, and asked my views of a little open wagon, and a separate and rapid drive to Trenton, I found they entirely coincided with his, and within a few moments I was rolling across the spacious, sunny plain of the Mohawk.

But mark the chances of life, nor dream of doing "an old stager." My private conveyance, the quiet suggestion of my quiet man, was the property of the very agent who had first accosted me, and who, as I thought, had dropped me from mind as a mere single passenger. Not he. Given, a party of twelve together, on the one hand, and a party of one upon

the other, to furnish a coach to the first, at \$—! and a wagon to the other, at \$—!! was his problem, and it was solved. Genius had made this man an emperor of nations; fate had placed him in authority over horses and hunters of the picturesque.

My charioteer was a fine boy of sixteen. He whipped along over the plank-road, and gossiped of the horses, the people, and the places we passed. He was sharp-eyed and clear-minded—a bright boy, who may one day be President. As we were slowly climbing the hill:

“Have you heard Jenny Lind, sir?” inquired my Antinous of the stables.

“Yes, often.”

“Great woman, sir. Don’t you think so?”

“I do.”

“She was here last week, sir.—Get up, Charlie!”

“Did you hear her?” I asked.

“Yes, sir, and I drove with her to the Falls—that is, Tom Higgins drove, but I sat on the box.”

“And was she pleased?”

“Yes, sir; only when she was going to see the Falls, everybody in the hotel ran to the door to look at her, so she went back to her room, and then slipped out of the back door. But there was something better than that, sir.”

“What was that?”

“She gave Tom Higgins fifty dollars when he drove her back. But there was something still better than that, sir.”

“Indeed! what was that?”

“Why, sir, as we came back, we passed a little wood, and she stopped the carriage, and stepped out with the rest of the party, and me and Tom Higgins, and went into the wood. It was towards sunset and the wood was beautiful. She walked about a little, and picked up flowers, and sung, like to herself, as if it were pleasant. By and by she sat down upon a rock and began to sing aloud. But before she stopped, a little bird came and sat upon the bough

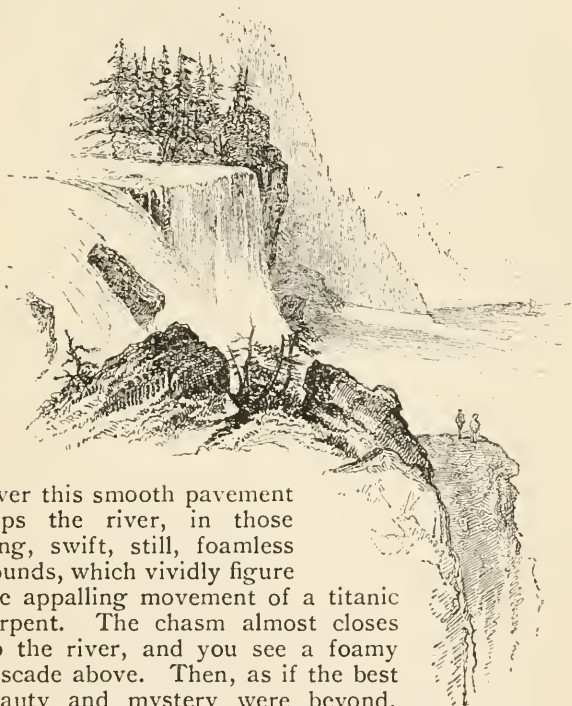
close by us. I saw it, sir, with my own eyes, the whole of it—and when Jenny Lind had done, he began to sing and shout away like she did. While he was singing she looked delighted, and when he stopped she sang again, and—oh! it was beautiful, sir. But the little bird wouldn't give it up, and he sang again, but not until she had done. Then Jenny Lind sang as well as ever she could. Her voice seemed to fill the woods all up with music, and when it was over, the little bird was still a while, but tried it again in a few moments. He couldn't do it, sir. He sang very bad, and then the foreign gentlemen with Jenny Lind laughed, and they all came back to the carriage."

We had left the plank-road and were approaching the hotel at the Falls through fine maple woods. It was pleasant to hear the boy's story. Was it a poor prelude to Trenton? I had not dreamed that the romance of the Poet's Lute and the Nightingale should be native to Oneida county no less than to Greece, and that its poet should be my callow charioteer, who may one day be President. When I sat at my window afterward and in the fading twilight looked over the maple woods, and heard the murmur of Trenton Falls, I wondered if the bird ever reached its nest, or was found dead in the woods without a gun-shot wound.

There is no better hotel than that at Trenton. It is spacious, and clean, and comfortable, and the table justifies its fame. Moreover, it is painted dark and not white, and stands very modestly on the edge of the woods that overhang the ravine of the Falls. Modestly, although it is high, for the glaring, white caravanseries, our summer palaces of pleasure, wear the flaunting aspect of being no better than they should be. Happy were we, were they always as good!

Poets' fancies only should image the Falls, they are so rich and rare a combination of quiet picturesqueness of beauty, and a sense of resistless force

in the rushing waters. You descend from a lofty wood into a long, rocky chasm, which the Germans would call a *Grund*, for it is not a valley. It is walled and paved with smooth rocks, and the thronging forest fringes the summit of the wall.



Over this smooth pavement slips the river, in those long, swift, still, foamless bounds, which vividly figure the appalling movement of a titanic serpent. The chasm almost closes up the river, and you see a foamy cascade above. Then, as if the best beauty and mystery were beyond, you creep along a narrow ledge in the rockside of the throat of the gorge, the water whirling and bubbling beneath, and reach the first large Fall. A slight spray enfolds you as a baptism in the spirit of the place. A broad ledge of the rock here offers firm and sufficient foothold while you gaze at the Falls.



Before you is a level parapet of rock, and the river, after sliding very shallowly over the broad bed above, concentrates mainly at one point for a fall, and plunges in a solid amber sheet.

Close by the side of this you climb, and pass along the base of the overhanging mountain, and stooping under the foot of an imperial cliff, stand before the great Fall, which has two plunges, a long one above, from which the river sheers obliquely over a polished floor of rock, and again plunges. The river bends here, and a high, square, regular bank projects from the cliff, smooth as a garden terrace, and perpetually veiled and softened by the spray. It is one of the most beautiful and boldest points in the long ravine, and when the late light of afternoon falls soft upon it, there is a strange contrast in your feelings as visions of Boccaccio's garden mingle with the wildness of American woods.

Upon the cliff above this great Fall is a little house where the weary may rest, and those who find "water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink," may pledge the spirit of Trenton, in that kind, if not that quality, of nectar which Boccaccio himself would have desired. Here, under the densely-foliaged trees sit musing above the Fall, and watch the broad stream concentrate as it nears the verge; and then from the deep dark indigo of the pool collected there, see it pour itself away, a fall of brilliant amber, into the light streaming warmly from the west up the ravine. As you, musing, gaze, your own fancy will flow from the sombreness of serious thought, and pour itself away in a spray of romance and reverie, far through the golden gloom of the past and the bright-hued hope of the future that streams toward you like the light from the west.

You will recall the European falls of fame; you will hear once more the glad Velino "cleave the wave-worn precipice," and mark the dark eyes of Italian girls, who steal to your side as you listen, and say, as if the dark eyes whispered it, "*un bai-*



*occhio, Signore."* You will see the Sibylline temple, high-crowning the cliff at Tivoli, and once more, over the sea-surface, but silent and motionless, of the Campagna, your eye will rest upon St. Peter's dome, rising mountain-like from the plain, and Beatrice d'Este will glide a pallid phantom, along the marble-floored, cypress-gloomed terraces of the villa. The thousand Alpine cascades of Switzerland will flicker through your memory, slight avalanches of snow-dust, shimmering into rainbow-mist, and the Rhine, beneath your back window in the hotel at Schaffhausen, will plunge once more over its little rocky barrier, sending its murmur far into the haunted depths of the Black Forest beside you. Or, farther and fainter still, the rapids of the Nile and the rills of Lebanon will rush and gurgle, as you did not dream to hear them again, nor will your fancy rest until it sinks in the oriental languor of the banks of Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus.

Wild is the witchery of water, and the spell enchanted, which its ceaseless flowing weaves. Such pictures were in that amber Fall. Such echoes answered those silver cadences. Such names, and places, and memories are now the synonyms of Trenton. But for you and for others it may sing different songs. An organ of many stops, it discourses sweet music in all. Not like the airy harpsichord of the fair Alice, dead centuries ago, tuned to a single strain, but like the heart of the young Phœbe, gushing gaily or gravely, according as the sun or shadow overswept it.

There is something especially pleasant in the tranquil, family-like character of the house at Trenton. It is by far the best hostelry of the kind that I have encountered in my summer wandering; and, lying away from any town or railroad, the traveller seems to have stepped back into the days when travelling was an event and not a habit, and when the necessity of moderation in speed imposed a corresponding leisure in enjoyment. Doubtless the railroad makes

us move mentally, as well as physically, with more rapidity. The eye sees more in life, but does the heart feel more, is experience really richer? Haste breeds indigestion, but happiness lies, first of all, in health.

The man who in the quiet round of life has made friends with every object of the landscape he knows, who sees its changes, and sympathizes with them, and who has learned from a single tree what men have exhausted all libraries and societies without finding—he is of better, because of profounder, experience than his friend who has raced over half the world in a twelve-month, and whose memory is only a kaleidoscope. A mile horizontally on the surface of the earth does not carry you one inch toward its centre, and yet it is in the centre that the gold mines are. A man who truly knows Shakespeare, only, is the master of a thousand who have squeezed the circulating libraries dry.

Do not fail to see Trenton. It is various-voiced. It is the playing of lutes on the moonlight lawn—as Stoddard delicately sings. It is well to listen for it in the pauses of the steam-shriek of our career. For if once your fancy hears its murmur, you will be as the boatman who catches through the roar of the Rhine, the song of the Lorelei, and you too will be won to delicious repose.

“ But thou, who didst appear so fair  
 To fond imagination,  
 Dost rival in the light of day,  
 Her delicate creation :  
 Meek loveliness is round thee spread,  
 A softness still and holy :  
 The grace of forest charms decayed,  
 And pastoral melancholy.

The vapours linger round the height ;  
 They meet—and soon must vanish :  
 One hour is theirs, nor more is mine,—  
 Sad thought, which I would banish,

But that I know, where'er I go,  
Thy genuine image, Yarrow,  
Will dwell with me,—to heighten joy,  
And cheer my mind in sorrow."

## NIAGARA

*August.*

THE Rapids before Niagara are not of water only. The Cataract is the centre of a vortex of travel—a maelstrom which you scarcely suspect until you are swimming round in its intense swiftness, and feel that you are drawn nearer and closer, every moment, to an awful and unimagined Presence.

The summer-bird of a traveller who skims up the Hudson dippingly, wending Niagara-ward, if he has never seen the Falls, and has heard of them all his life, loiters along his way, quite unimpressed by the anticipation of his bourne, whose image has lost much of its grandeur in his mind by the household familiarity of the name. It is somewhat so with Switzerland after a residence in Europe. You approach half languidly, more than half suspicious that the fixed stare of the world has melted the glaciers, and the snow sifted along inaccessible, rocky crevices, or at least has sadly stained them, and that even the Alps have been lionized into littleness. But some choice evening, as if the earth had suddenly bared her bosom to the glowing kiss of the dying day, you behold from Berne or Zurich the austere purity of the snow-Alps, incredibly lofty, majestic and awful, and the worship of remembrance is for ever after, living and profound.

So I came sauntering along through Western New York, (sauntering by steam!—and yet the mind may loiter, may remain fast and firm behind, although the body flies,) and turned aside with my presidential

Antinous at Trenton, nor once paused to listen through its graceful whisper for the regal voice beyond. In the ravine of Trenton you meet some chance friend returning from the great cataract, and sit with him upon the softest rock, where you can well watch the beautiful amber-fall the while, and curiously compare, at the last moment, your own fancies, with the daguerrean exactness of his fresh impression. But, after all, it is only curiously. You dream and wonder vaguely, and comparisons are constantly baffled by the syren singing of the falling waters which will have no divided love. Allured by the beauty in whose lap you lie, your friend's present praises are much sincerer and more intelligible than his remembered raptures.

Such a friend I met and we discussed Niagara. But as he told his story, I was placing the stairs here, and towers there, about the rocks; and the great sheet and the little sheet were before us; and Goat Island smiled greenly in the bold, beautiful bank, which, like a verdured terrace, hung toward the stream from an enchanted palace in the pines; and when the tale was told, I had a very pleasant, if somewhat incongruous, fancy of Niagara, as a kind of sublimed Trenton.

And still, with memory clinging to the amber skirts of Trenton, I rushed along on a day that veiled the outline of the landscape with scudding gusts of mist, through the most classical of all American regions—through Rome, and Manlius, and Syracuse, and Camillus, and Marcellus; ruthlessly on, through Waterloo, Geneva, East Vienna, Rochester, Cold Water, Chili, (natural neighbours!) Byron, Attica, and Darien; then drew breath enough to wonder, that with such wealth of names inherited from the Indians, we so tenaciously cling to the glories of old fames to cover the nakedness of our newness, and saw, at the same moment that we had left classicality, that we had overtaken a name peculiar to our continent, and had arrived at Buffalo!

Why not Bison, Ox, or Wild Horse? And this, too, with the waves breaking along the shore of Lake Ontario, a majestic and melodious Indian name, hitherto unappropriated to a city. No wonder that the Buffalo sky thundered and lightened all night, from sheer vexation at its loss. I awoke at midnight to the music of a serenade that was vainly striving to soothe the tempest, and later, the angry clash of fire-bells stormed against the storm. But it was not comforted or subdued. Still, in the lull of the music, and the pauses of the bells, I heard it muttering and moaning as it glared: "I, that am Buffalo, might have been Ontario."

But the storm wept itself away, and I awoke at morning to find myself upon the verge of the interest and excitement which immediately precedes all great events. During the previous day I had smiled rather loftily at the idea of excitement in approaching Niagara; but when my luggage was checked, and I bought a ticket for "Niagara Falls," and stepping into the cars, knew that I should not alight until I heard the roar and saw the spray of the cataract; then the sense of its grandeur, of its unique sublimity, which I perfectly knew, though I had never seen, came down upon me, and smote me suddenly with awe—as when a man who has loitered idly to St. Peter's, grasps the leathern curtain to push it aside, that he may behold the magnificence whose remembered lustre shall illuminate every year of his life.

It is remarkable that the anti-romance of a railroad is a mere prejudice. The straight lines piercing the rounding landscape are essentially poetic, and the fervid desire of sight and possession which fires the mind upon approaching beloved or famous places and persons, takes adequate form in the steam-speed of a train which, straight as thought and swift as hope, cleaves the country to the single point. In the wild woods we do not insist upon the prosaic character of the railroad, because we wish to hurry through; and no one, I believe, not even the poets,

sigh for the good old times of staging from Albany to Niagara.

But, in Europe, in lands of traditional romance, it appears at first very differently. A railroad to Venice ! "Heaven forefend !" said I, as I lumbered easily out of Florence in a vettura, comfortably accomplishing its thirty miles a day. "Heaven forefend !" said I still, as we climbed the Apennines, and descending, rolled into the quaint, arcaded Bologna, and listened beneath Raphael's St. Cecilia, to hear if no spirit of a sound trembled from the harp-strings. "Heaven forefend !" said I still, as we jogged along the Lombard post-roads, green and golden, and glittering with the swaying of vines in the languid wind, hanging from grave, stiff old poplars, like beautiful, winning, bewildering arms of loveliness, caressing whole perspectives of solemn quaker papas, and festooning the road as if the summer were a festival of Bacchus, and a jolly rout of bacchanals had but now reeled along to the vintage. "Heaven forefend !" said I, as we tramped through the grassy streets of Ferrara, mouthing uncertain verses from Tasso, and utterly incredulous of Byron's fable of songless gondoliers beyond : and still, "Heaven forefend !" said I, as by the many-domed cathedral of St. Antony, we mingled in the evening Corso, and straining our eyes for the University of Padua, alighted at the hotel, thirty or forty miles from Venice. But when, the next morning, I opened my eyes, and, eschewing the cud of dreams, said to myself, "You are thirty miles from Venice," I sprang up like one whose marriage-morn has dawned, and cried aloud, "Thank God, there is a railroad to Venice !"

Nor could the speed of that railroad more than figure the eagerness of my desire, as it swept us through the vineyards. Nor did the dream of Venice fade, but deepen rather, for the strange contrast of that wild speed, and its eternal, romantic rest.

I had the same eagerness in stepping upon the cars at Buffalo. Within a certain circumference every-

body is Niagarized, and flies in a frenzy to the centre as filings to the magnet. Before the train stopped, and while I fancied that we were slackening speed for a way-station—I, listening the while to the pleasant music of words, that weaned my hearing from any roar of waters—a crowd of men leaped from the cars, and ran like thieves, lovers, soldiers, or what you will, to the “Cataract,” as the conductor said. I looked upon them at once as a select party of poets, overwhelmed by the enthusiastic desire to see the Falls. It was an error : they were “knowing ones,” intent upon the first choice of rooms at the “Cataract House.” I followed them, and found a *queue*, as at the box-office of the opera in Paris—a long train of travellers waiting to enter their names. Not one could have a room yet, (it was ten o’clock,) but at half-past two everybody was going away, and then everybody could be accommodated.

—And meanwhile?

—Meanwhile, Niagara.

Disappointment in Niagara seems to be affected, or childish. Your fancies may be very different, but the regal reality sweeps them away like weeds and dreams. You may have nourished some impossible idea of one ocean pouring itself over a precipice into another. But it was a wild whim of inexperience, and is in a moment forgotten. If, standing upon the bridge as you cross to Goat Island, you can watch the wild sweep and swirl of the waters around the wooded point above, dashing, swelling, and raging, but awful from the inevitable and resistless rush, and not feel that your fancy of a sea is paled by the chaos of wild water that tumbles toward you, then you are a child, and the forms of your thought are not precise enough for the profoundest satisfaction in great natural spectacles.

Over that bridge how slowly you will walk, and how silently, gazing in awe at the tempestuous sweep of the rapids, and glancing with wonder at the faint cloud of spray over the American Fall. As the sense



of grandeur and beauty subdues your mind, you will still move quietly onward, pausing a moment, leaning a moment on the railing, closing your eyes to hear only Niagara, and ever, as a child says its prayers in a time of danger, slowly, and with strange slowness, repeating to yourself, "Niagara ! Niagara !"

For although you have not yet seen the Cataract, you feel that nothing else can be the crisis of this excitement. Were you suddenly placed blindfolded where you stand, and your eyes were unbandaged, and you were asked, "What shall be the result of all this?" the answer would accompany the question, "Niagara !"

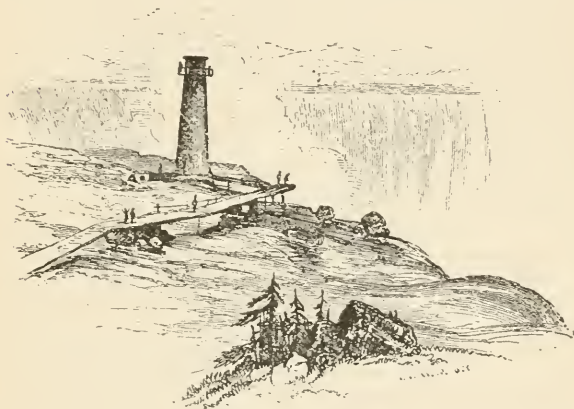
Yet marvellous calmness still waits upon intense feeling. "It was odd," wrote Sterling to a friend, "to be curiously studying the figures on the doctor's waistcoat, while my life, as I thought, was bleeding from my lips." We must still sport with our emotions. Some philosopher will die, his last breath sparkling from his lips in a pun. Some fair and fated Lady Jane Grey will span her slight neck with her delicate fingers, and smile to the headsman that his task is easy. And we, with kindred feeling, turn aside into the shop of Indian curiosities and play with Niagara, treating it as a jester, as a Bayadere, to await our pleasure.

Then, through the woods on Goat Island—solemn and stately woods—how slowly you will walk, again, and how silently ! Ten years ago, your friend carved his name upon some tree there, and Niagara must now wait until he finds it, swollen and shapeless with time. You saunter on. It is not a sunny day. It is cloudy, but the light is moist and rich, and when you emerge upon the quiet green path that skirts the English Rapids, the sense of life in the waters—the water as a symbol of life and human passion—fills your mind. Certainly no other water in the world is watched with such anxiety, with such sympathy. The helplessness of its frenzied sweep saddens your heart. It is dark, fateful, foreboding. At times, as



if a wild despair had seized it and rent it, it seethes, and struggles, and dashes foam-like into the air. Not with kindred passion do you regard it, but sadly, with folded hands of resignation, as you watch the death struggles of a hero. It sweeps away as you look, dark, and cold, and curling, and the seething you saw, before your thought is shaped, is an eddy of foam in the Niagara River below.

As yet you have not seen the Fall. You are coming with its waters, and are at its level. But groups



of persons, sitting upon yonder point, which we see through the trees, are looking at the Cataract. We do not pause for them; we run now, down the path, along the bridges, into the Tower, and lean far over where the spray cools our faces. The living water of the rapids moves to its fall, as if torpid with terror; and the river that we saw, in one vast volume now pours over the parapet, and makes Niagara. It is not all stricken into foam as it falls, but the densest mass is smooth, and almost of livid green.

Yet, even as it plunges, see how curls of spray exude from the very substance of the mass, airy,

sparkling and wreathing into mist—emblems of the water's resurrection into summer clouds. Looking over into the abyss, we behold nothing below, we hear only a slow, constant thunder; and, bewildered in the mist, dream that the Cataract has cloven the earth to its centre, and that, pouring its waters into the fervent inner heat, they hiss into spray, and overhang the fated Fall, the sweat of its agony.

## NIAGARA, AGAIN

*August.*

“ARETHUSA arose  
 From her couch of snows  
 In the Acroceraunian Mountains—  
 From cloud and from crag  
 With many a jag,  
 Shepherding her bright fountains,  
 She leapt down the rocks,  
 With her rainbow locks  
 Streaming among the streams :  
 Her steps paved with green  
 The downward ravine,  
 Which slopes to the Western gleams :  
 And gliding and springing,  
 She went ever singing  
 In murmurs as soft as sleep :  
 The earth seemed to love her,  
 And heaven smiled above her,  
 As she lingered toward the deep.”

SHELLEY would wonder, could he know that these lines of his were quoted at Niagara. But Niagara is no less beautiful than sublime, although I do not remember to have heard much of its beauty. It even suggests the personal feeling implied in such verses, and which, at a distance, seems utterly incompatible with the grandeur of the spot.

Nature has her partialities for places as well as

persons, and as she thrones the Goethean or Websterian intellect upon "the front of Jove himself," so she is quite sure to adorn the feet of her snowy Alps with the lustrous green of vineyards, the stately shade of chestnuts, or the undulating sweep of lawn-like pastures. Here at Niagara she enamels the cliffs with delicate verdure, and the luminous gloom of the wood upon Goat Island invites to meditation with cathedral solemnity.

Nothing struck me more than the ease of access to the very verge of the Cataract. Upon the narrow point between the large and small American falls you may sit upon the soft bank on a tranquil afternoon, dabbling your feet in the swiftly slipping water, reading the most dreamy of romances, and soothed by the huge roar, as if you were the vicegerent of the prophet, and the flow of the cool, smooth river but the constant caressing of troops of slaves, and the roar of the Cataract but hushed voices singing their lord to sleep.

But if in your reading you pause, or if the low ripple of talk subsides, in which your soul was laved, as your frame in the gurgling freshness of wood-streams, and your eyes are left charmed upon the current—or if your dream dissolves and you behold the water, its own fascination is not less than that of the romance. It flows so tranquilly, is so unimpatient of the mighty plunge, that it woos and woos you to lay your head upon its breast and slide into dreamless sleep.

"Darkling, I listen ; and, for many a time,  
I have been half in love with easeful Death—  
Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,  
To take into the air my quiet breath :  
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
In such an ecstasy !  
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—  
To thy high requiem become a sod."

So sang Keats to the nightingale which sang to

him, and whoever was really so enamoured could ill resist the seduction of the stream at the Falls. For in its might subsides all fear. It is a force so resistless, that it would need only a slight step, the merest overture of your will. If Niagara were in France, I am confident the Frenchmen would make suicide pic-nics to the Cataract. Unhappy lovers would take express trains, and their "quietus make" where their dirge would be endless. The French, of course, would add the melodramatic character of such an ending to its intrinsic charms, and even John Bull might forego the satisfaction of a leap from the Duke of York's column for a Niagaran annihilation.

As you sit, chatting and wondering, upon the bench at this point, you are sure to hear the sad romance of two years since. A young man caught up a child and swung it to and fro over the water only a few feet from the precipice, laughing gaily and feigning fright, when suddenly the child sprang from his arms into the rapid. He stepped in instantly, for the water near the shore is not more than two feet deep, and caught her again in his arms. But the treacherous stones at the bottom were so slippery with the constant action of the water, that, although he could resist the force of the stream, he could not maintain his foothold, and was swept with the child in his arms, and his betrothed mistress watching him from the bank, directly over the fall. The man who told me the story was a musician and had still a low tone of horror in his voice; for he said that, as the young man came to the Point, he told him there was to be a dance that evening and that he must have his music ready. They had scarcely parted, his words were yet ringing in his ears, when he heard a curdling shriek of terror, and knew that "somebody had gone over the Falls."

Niagara has but one interest, and that absorbs all attention. The country around is entirely level, and covered with woods and grain fields. It is very thinly populated; civilization seems to have made

small inroad upon the primeval grandeur of the spot. Standing upon the western end of Goat Island and looking up the stream the wooded banks stare back upon you as in a savage silence of folded arms and scornful eyes. They are not fair woods, but dark



forests. They smite you only with a sense of magnificent space, as I fancy the impression of Rocky Mountain scenery, but which is akin to that of chaos.

From the spot where stood the young English hermit's cottage, upon Goat Island, you front the Canada shore. But the name dies along your mind almost without echo, even as your voice might call

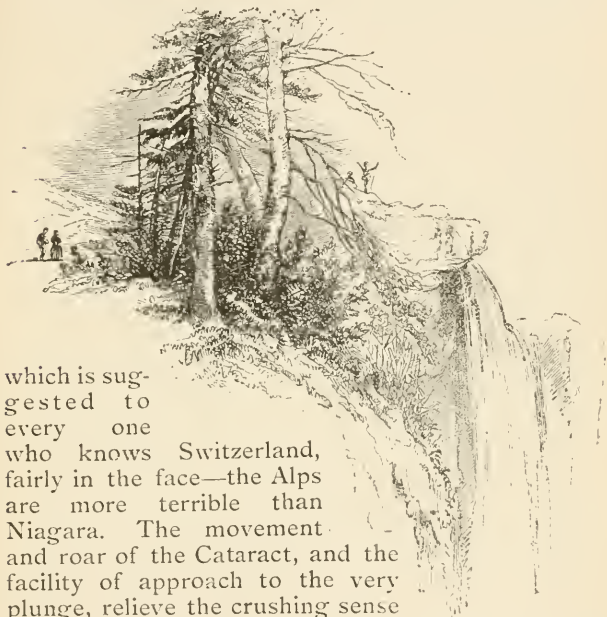
into those dark forests, but melt from them no human response. Canada! The name is a mist in the mind. Slowly and vaguely a few remembrances shape themselves. Shadowy and terrible traditions of hopeless and heartless Indian wars, which tapped the choicest veins of French and English blood, but gave no glory in return, half tell themselves in the mind, like the croning of a beldame in the chimney corner.

Slowly from the red mist of that vague remembrance rise the names of Wolfe and Montgomery and Montcalm, heroes where heroism little availed, for the Indian element mingled in the story, and where the Indian is, there nobility and chivalry are not. You look across the rapids upon a country which has made no mark in history; where few men love to live, except those who have little choice; where the towns are stagnant and few; upon a country whose son no man is proud to be, and the barrenness of the impression somewhat colours your feelings of Niagara, for the American shore is wild too, although the zealous activity of the little village at the Falls, and the white neatness of Lewiston, below, relieve the sense of desolation upon the distant banks.

The beauty of Niagara is in its immediate neighbourhood. It is upon Goat Island—upon the cliffs over which hangs the greenest verdure—in the trees that lean out and against the Rapids, as if the forest were enamoured of the waters, and which overhang and dip, suffering their youngest and softest leaves to thrill in the trembling frenzy of the touch of Niagara. It is in the vivid contrast of the repose of lofty trees and the whirl of a living river—and in the contrast, more singular and subtle, of twinkling, shimmering leaves, and the same magnificent madness. It is in the profuse and splendid play of colours in and around the Cataract, and in the thousand evanescent fancies which wreath its image in the mind as the sparkling vapour floats, a rainbow, around the reality. It is in the flowers that grow

quietly along the edges of the precipices, to the slightest of which one drop of the clouds of spray that curl from the seething abyss is the sufficient elixir of a long and lovely life.

Yet—for we must look the Alpine comparison



which is suggested to every one who knows Switzerland, fairly in the face—the Alps are more terrible than Niagara. The movement and roar of the Cataract, and the facility of approach to the very plunge, relieve the crushing sense of awfulness which the silent, inaccessible, deadly solitudes of the high Alps inspire. The war of an avalanche heard in those solemn heights, because beginning often and ending beyond the point that human feet may ever tread, is a sound of dread and awe like that of the mysterious movement of another world, heard through the silence of our own.

Besides, where trees grow, there human sympathy lingers. Doubtless it is the supreme beauty of the edges of Niagara, which often causes travellers to fancy that they are disappointed, as if in Semiramis



they should see more of the woman than of the queen. But, climbing the Alps, you leave trees below. They shrink and retire. They lose their bloom and beauty. They decline from tenderness into toughness; from delicate, shifting hues into sombre evergreen—darker and more solemn, until they are almost black, until they are dwarfed and scant and wretched, and are finally seen no more. With the trees, you leave the sights and sounds and sentiments of life. The Alpine peaks are the ragged edges of creation, half blent with chaos. Upon them, inaccessible for ever, in the midst of the endless murmur of the world, antemundane silence lies stranded, like the corse of an antediluvian upon a solitary rock-point in the sea. Painfully climbing toward those heights you may feel, with the fascination of wonder and awe, that you look, as the Chinese say, behind the beginning.

But if the Alps are thus death, Niagara is life; and you know which is the more terrible. It is a life, however, which you are to observe in many ways—from below, from above, from the sides, from the suspension bridge, and, finally, you must steam up to its very front, and then climb down behind it.

These two latter excursions are by no means to be omitted. The little steamer leaves the shore by the suspension bridge, and, gliding with effort into the current of the river, you remember that there is the Cataract before and the whirlpool behind, and sheer rocky precipices on each side. But there is only gay gossip and pleasant wonder all around you, the morning is mild, and the Falls flash like a plunge of white flame. Slowly, slowly, tugs the little boat against the stream. She hugs the shore, rocky-hearted, stiff, straight, prim old puritan of a shore that it is, although it is wreathed and crowned with graceful foliage.

Presently comes a puff of cool spray. Is it a threat, a kiss, or a warning from our terrible bourne? The fussy little captain exhorts everybody to wrap in a water-proof cloak and cap; we shall else be



soaked through and through, as we were never soaked by shower before. But some of us, beautiful daughters of a mother famously fair, love our looks, and would fain enjoy everything without making ourselves less lovely.

"Pooh, pooh!" insists our captain, "I wouldn't give three cents for them 'ere bunnets," (our choice travelling hats!) "if they once get wet."

So we consent to cloaks, but we positively decline India-rubber caps, especially after an advance to six cents by a gallant friend upon the captain's bid for our "bunnets." The men must shift for themselves. Here we are in the roar and the rush and the spray. Whew! it drives, it sweeps, and the steady thunder of the Cataract booms, cramming the air with sound. Only a few of us hold the upper deck. Nor are we, who have no mantles, all unprotected, for shawls wont to protect flowers from the summer wind, now shield us from the spray of Niagara.

We sweep along upon our leaf, which quivers and skims the foam—sweep straight into the blinding white, thick, suffocating mist of the Cataract, strain our eyes, as we gasp, for the curve of the Fall, for the parapet above, and in a sudden break of the cloud, through which breathes cold the very air of the rush of waters, we catch a glorious glimpse of a calm ocean pouring white and resistless from the blue sky above into the white clouds below, and behold the very image of that Mind's process whose might

———"Moves on  
His undisturbed affairs."

I glance backward upon the deck, which is raked by the scudding gusts of spray, and see a line of wet men crouching together, like a group of Esquimaux, with their faces upturned toward the Fall. They sit motionless, and staring, and appalled, like a troop in Dante's "Inferno." But straight before us—good God! pilot, close under the bow there, looming through the mist! Are you blind? are you mad? or

does the Cataract mock our feeble power, and will claim its victims? A black rock, ambushed in the surge and spray, lowers before us. We are driving straight upon it—we all see it, but we do not speak. We fancy that the boat will not obey—that the due fate shall reward this terrific trifling. Straight before us, a boat's length away, and lo! swerving with the current around the rock, on and farther, with felicitous daring, the little *Maid of the Mist* dances up to the very foot of the Falls, wrapping herself saucily in the rainbow robe of its own mist. There we tremble, in perfect security, mocking with our little *Maid* the might of Niagara. For man is the magician, as he plants his foot upon the neck of mountains, and passes the awful Alps, safely as the Israelites through the divided sea, so he dips his hand into Niagara, and gathering a few drops from its waters, educes a force from Niagara itself, by which he confronts and defies it. The very water which as steam was moving us to the Cataract, had plunged over it as spray a few hours before.

—Or go, some bright morning down the Biddle staircase, and creeping along under the cliff, change your dress at the little house by the separate sheet of the American Fall. The change made, we shall reappear like exhausted firemen, or Swampscot fishermen. Some of us will not insist upon our "bunnets" but will lay them aside and join the dilapidated firemen and fishermen outside the house, as Bloomerized Undines, mermaids, or naiads. A few descending steps of rock, and we have reached the perpendicular wooden staircase that leads under the Fall. Do not stop—do not pause to look affrighted down into that whirring cauldron of cold mist, where the winds dart, blinding, in arrowy gusts. Now we see the platform across the bottom—now a cloud of mist blots it out. And it roars so!

Come, Fishermen, Mermaids, Naiads, Firemen and Undine, down! down! Cling to the railing! Lean on me! Thou gossamer blossom which the

softest summer zephyr would thrill, whither will these mad gales beneath the Cataract whirl thee! We are here upon the narrow platform; it is railed upon each side, and the drops dash like sleet, like acute hail, against our faces. The swift sweep of the water across the floor would slide us also into the yawning gulf beyond, but clinging with our hands, we move securely as in calm airs. And now look up, for you stand directly beneath the arching water, directly under the fall. The rock is hollowed, and the round pebbles on the ground rush and rattle with the sliding water as on the sea-beach. You leave the platform, you climb between two rocks, and sliding along a staging, unstable almost as the water, yet quite firm enough, you stand directly upon the rocks, and Niagara plunges and tumbles above you and around you.

There at sunset, and only there, you may see three circular rainbows, one within another. For Niagara has unimagined boons for her lovers—rewards of beauty so profound that she enjoins silence as the proof of fidelity.

Returning, there is an overhanging shelf of rock, and there, except that it is cold and wet, you sit secluded from the spray. It is a lonely cave, curtained from the sun by the Cataract, for ever. And if still your daring is untamed, you may climb over slippery rocks in the blinding mist and the deafening roar, and feel yourself as far under the Great American Fall as human foot may venture.

I must stop. If you have been at Niagara, what I have written may recall it, but can hardly paint, except to remembrance, the austere grandeur and dreamy beauties which are its characteristics. Your few days there are days upon the river bank, walking and wondering. Your frail fancies of it are swallowed up as they rise, like chance flowers flung upon its current. Many a man to whom Niagara has been a hope, and an inspiration, and who has stood before its majesty awe-stricken and hushed,

secretly wonders that his words describing it are not pictures and poems. But any great natural object—a cataract, an Alp, a storm at sea—are seed too vast for any sudden flowering. They lie in experience moulding life. At length the pure peaks of noble aims and the broad flow of a generous manhood betray that in some happy hour of youth you have seen the Alps and Niagara.

## SARATOGA

*August.*

“Wilt thou be a nun, Sophie?  
 Nothing but a nun?  
 Is it not a better thing  
 With thy friends to laugh and sing?  
 To be loved and sought?  
 To be wooed and—won?  
 Dost thou love the shadow, Sophie,  
 Better than the sun?”

ROMANCE is the necessary association of watering-places, because they are the haunts of youth and beauty seeking pleasure. When on some opaline May day you drive out from Naples to Baiæ, the Saratoga of old Rome, and in the golden light of the waning afternoon drink Falernian while you look upon the vineyards where it ripened for Horace, your fancy is thronged with the images of Romance, and you could listen to catch some echo of a long silent love-song, lingering in the air.

It is a kind of sentimentality inseparable from the spot—a pensive reverie into which few men are loth to fall; for its atmosphere is “the light that never was on sea or land.” Yet romance, like a ghost, eludes touching. It is always where you were, not where you are. The interview or the conversation was prose at the time, but it is poetry in memory.

Thus persons of poetic feeling speak of people and events as if they were the figures of a romance and are laughed at for seeing everything through their imagination. But why is it not as pleasant to see through imagination as through scepticism? Why, because people are bad, should I be faithless of the virtues of a beautiful woman?

Life is the best thing we can possibly make of it. It is dull and dismal and heavy, if a man loses his temper : it is glowing with promise and satisfaction if he is not ashamed of his emotions. Young America is very anxious to be a man of the world. He has heard that in England a gentleman is a being of sublime indifference, who has exhausted all varieties of experience—who has, in fact, opened the oyster of the world. So Young America cultivates nonchalance with the ladies, and cannot help it if he does know everything that is worth knowing. To every man of thought and perception he is the miserable travesty of a human being, whose social life is an injustice and an insult to every woman.

He does not see that indifference is satiety—that it is the weakness of a man whom circumstances have mastered, and not the sensitive calmness, like a lake's surface, of profound and digested experience. What is the charm of a belle but her purely natural manners? And they are charming, not in themselves, but because they harmonize with her nature and character. Yet if another person imitates her manners in the hope of being a belle, the result is at once ludicrous and painful. But such musings, however suggested by the place, I fancy you will consider the sand barren in which Saratoga lies.

The romance of a watering-place, like other romance, always seems past when you are there. Here at Saratoga, when the last polka is polked, and the last light in the ball-room is extinguished, you saunter along the great piazza, with the "good-night" of Beauty yet trembling upon your lips, and meet some old Habitué, or even a group of them,

smoking in lonely arm-chairs, and meditating the days departed.

The great court is dark and still. The waning moon is rising beyond the trees, but does not yet draw their shadows, moonlight-mosaics, upon the lawn. There are no mysterious couples moving in the garden, not a solitary foot-fall upon the piazza. A few lanterns burn dimly about the doors, and the light yet lingering in a lofty chamber reminds you that some form, whose grace this evening has made memory a festival, is robing itself for dreams.

If courtly Edmund Waller were with you, it would not be hard to tempt him to step with you across the court to serenade under that window, with the most musical and genuine of his verses.

“Go, lovely Rose !  
Tell her, who wastes her time and me,  
That now she knows,  
When I resemble her to thee,  
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

Tell her that's young,  
And shuns to have her graces spied,  
That hadst thou sprung  
In deserts, where no men abide,  
Thou must have uncommended died.

Small is the worth  
Of beauty from the light retired ;  
Bid her come forth,  
Suffer herself to be desired,  
And not blush so to be admired.

Then die ! that she  
The common fate of all things rare  
May read in thee —  
How small a part of time they share  
That are so wondrous sweet and fair.”

He not being at Saratoga this year you are content with looking across the court and remembering his song. The moonlight softens your heart as did the golden days at Baiæ. You, too, seat yourself in a lonely arm-chair, and your reveries harmonize with

the melancholy minor of the old Habitué's reflections. You speak to him, musingly, of the "lovely Rose" who wastes her time and you.

"Yes," he responds, "but you should have seen Saratoga in her mother's days."

And while the moon rides higher, and pales from the yellow of her rising into a watery lustre, you hear stories of blooming belles, who are grandmothers now, and of brilliant beaux, bald now and gouty. These midnight gossips are very mournful. They will not suffer you to leave those, whose farewells yet thrill your heart, in the eternal morning of youth, but compel you to forecast their doom, to draw sad and strange outlines upon the future—to paint pictures of age, wrinkles, ochre-veined hands and mob-caps—until your Saratoga episode of pleasure has sombered into an Egyptian banquet, with your old, silently-smoking, and meditative Habitué for the death's head.

Nor is it strange that you should then repeat to him Charles Lamb's "Gipsy's Malison," with its fantastic, Egyptian-like sternness.

"Suck, baby, suck, mother's love grows by giving,  
Drain the sweet founts that only thrive by wasting;  
Black manhood comes, when riotous, guilty living  
Hands thee the cup that shall be death in tasting.

Kiss, baby, kiss, mother's lips shine by kisses,  
Choke the warm breath that else would fall in blessings;  
Black manhood comes, when turbulent, guilty blisses,  
Tends thee the kiss that poisons mid caressings.

Hang, baby, hang, mother's love loves such forces,  
Shame the fond neck that bends still to thy clinging.  
Black manhood comes, when violent lawless courses  
Leave thee a spectacle in rude air swinging."

In fact, after a few such midnights, even the morning sunshine cannot melt away this Egyptian character from the old Habitués. As you cross the court, after breakfast, to the bowling-alley, with a bevy so young and lovely, that age and mob-caps seem only fantastic visions of dyspepsia, and, of

hearts that were never young, you will see them sitting, a solemn reality of "black manhood," along the western piazza, leaning back in arm-chairs, smoking perhaps, chatting of stocks possibly,—a little rounded in the shoulders, holding canes which are no longer foppish switches, but substantial and serious supports. They are the sub-bass in the various-voiced song, the prosaic notes to the pleasant lyric of Saratoga life.

They are not really thinking of stocks, nor are they very conscious of the flavour of their cigars, but they watch the scene as they would dream a dream. As the sound of young voices pulses toward them on the morning air, as they watch the flitting forms, the cool morning-dresses, the gush of youth overflowing the sunny and shady paths of the garden, they are old *Habitués* no longer; they are those gentlemen, gallant and gay, dancing in the warm light of bright eyes toward a future gorgeous as a sunset, gossiping humorously or seriously, according as the light of eyes is sunshine or moonlight, and it is themselves as they were, with their own parties, their own loves, jealousies and scandals, moving briskly across the garden to the bowling-alley.

We pass,—butterflies of this summer,—and the vision fades upon their eyes. It was only the image of dead days, only the *Fata Morgana* of the enchanted islands they shall see no more, only the ghosts of grace and beauty, that witched the world for their youth.

"The mossy marbles rest  
On the lips that they have pressed  
In their bloom,  
And the names they loved to hear  
Have been carved for many a year  
On the tomb."

We stroll down the street to Congress Hall, we make a pilgrimage to the piazza, which was the Saratoga of our reading and romance—to Congress Hall, across whose smooth-columned piazza we pass,



to pay the tribute of our homage to the spot where so much love beat in warm hearts and blushed in beautiful cheeks. For when Saratoga was first fashionable, Congress Hall was the temple of fashion.

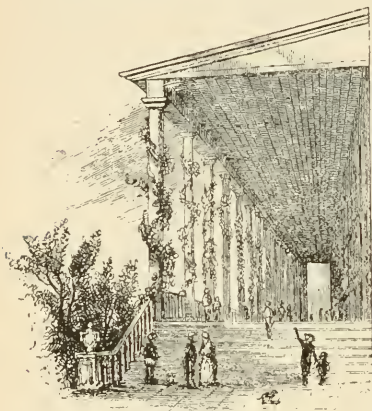
If you observe, while "we youth" (as Falstaff would say, were he an old Habitué,) are grieving that the romance is gone, and are regretting its going to the companion of our promenade, and are sitting, meditative and melancholy, with the Habitués at midnight, we are all the while, and therein, tasting quite as sparkling a draught of romance as ever our revered grandparents quaffed. And no sooner have the doors of the "United States" clanged awful upon our departure, than sad and sweet faces of remembrance look from all the windows, and in the young, feminine fancy, when Saratoga is once left behind, the great hotel stands shining like a transfigured palace of fairy.

Be assured, Saratoga is still a golden-clasped, illuminated romance for summer reading. Young men still linger, loth to fly, and when the trunk must be packed, they yet sit gossiping upon the edge of the bed, and were you under it, you would hear how every Tom Thumb, or Prince Riquet with the tuft, was the most chivalric and resistless of King Arthurs; what innumerable fair-haired Preciosas were wondering at the same wonderful Arthurs; and how many a Fatima has been rescued, or at least was clearly ready to be rescued, from unpolking, stock-jobbing, mercantile old Blue Beards. Then, gorged with experience, *blasé* of the world, patronizing and enduring life, the royal Arthurs, scorning the heaps of broken hearts they leave behind, transfer themselves and their boots to a new realm of conquest at Newport, and reduce the most impregnable heart with a Redowa, or a fatally fascinating Schottish.

But while we laugh at Saratoga, its dancing, dressing, and flirtation, it is yet a "coign of vantage" for an observing eye. It is not all dress and dancing. Like every aspect of life, and like most persons, it is

a hint and suggestion of something high and poetic. It is an oasis of repose in the desert of our American hurry. Life is leisurely there, and business is amusement.

It is perpetual festival. The "United States" is



the nearest hit we Americans can make to Boccaccio's garden. It is a spacious house, admirably kept, with a stately piazza surrounding a smooth green lawn, constantly close-shaven, and shadowed with lofty trees. Along that stately piazza we pass to the ball-room, and cross that lawn under those trees to the bowling-alley, and the place of spirits.

We rise and breakfast at any time. Then we chat a little and bowl till noon. If you choose, you may sit apart and converse, instead of bowling, upon metaphysics and morals. At noon, we must return to the parlour and practise the polka which we have not danced since yesterday midnight. There are sofas and comfortable chairs strewn around the room, and, if you have reached no metaphysical conclusion, in the bowling-alley, you may wish to continue your chat. We ladies must go shopping after the polka, and we mere men may go to the bath. Dinner then, in our semi-toilettes, seeing Ambrose and Anthony to get us something to eat, and watching the mighty Morris, in an endless frenzy of excitement, tearing his hair, whenever a plate, loud-crashing, shivers on the floor.

After dinner the band plays upon the lawn, and we all promenade upon the piazza, or in the walks

of the court, or sit at the parlour windows. We discuss the new arrivals. We criticize dresses, and styles, and manners. We discriminate the arctic and antarctic Bostonians, fair, still, and stately, with a vein of scorn in their Saratoga enjoyment, and the languid, cordial, and careless Southerners, far from precise in dress or style, but balmy in manner as a bland southern morning. We mark the crisp courtesy of the New Yorker, elegant in dress, exclusive in association, a pallid ghost of Paris—without its



easy elegance, its *bonhomie*, its gracious *savoir faire*, without the *spirituel* sparkle of its conversation, and its natural and elastic grace of style. We find that a Parisian toilette is not France, nor grace, nor fascination. We discover that exclusiveness is not elegance.

But while we mark and moralize, the last strain of *Lucia* or *Ernani* has died away, and it is five o'clock. A crowd of carriages throngs the street before the door, there is a flutter through the hall, a tripping up and down stairs, and we are bowling along to the lake. There is but one drive: everybody goes to

the lake. And no sooner have we turned by the Congress Spring, than we are in the depths of the country, in a long, level reach of pines, with a few distant hills of the Green Mountains rolling along the horizon. It is a city gala at the hotel, but the five minutes were magical, and among the pines upon the road we remember the city and its life as a winter dream.

The vivid and sudden contrast of this little drive with the hotel, is one of the pleasantest points of Saratoga life. In the excitement of the day, it is like stepping out on summer evenings from the glaring ball-room upon the cool and still piazza.

There is a range of carriages at the Lake. A select party is dining upon those choice trouts, black bass and young woodcock—various other select parties are scattered about upon the banks or on the piazza, watching the sails and sipping cobblers. The descent to the Lake is very steep, and the smooth water is dotted with a few boats gliding under the low, monotonous banks. The afternoon is tranquil, the light is tender, the air is soft, and the lapping of the water upon the pebbly shore is haply not so musical as words spoken upon its surface.

In the sunset we bowl back again to the hotel. I saw most autumnal sunsets at Saratoga, cold and gorgeous, like the splendour of October woods. They were still and solemn over the purple hills of the horizon, and their light looked strangely in at the windows of the hotel. Many a belle, just arrived from the drive and about to consider the evening's dressing, paused a moment at the window, stood resplendent in that dying light, and a shade of melancholy touched her lithe fancies, as a cloud dims the waving of golden grain. Who had stood there to dress for a Saratoga ball years ago? Who should stand there, dressing, years to come? This Saratoga, dreamed of, wondered at, longed for—where to be a belle was the flower of human felicity—whose walks, drives, hops, moonlight talks and mornings should

be the supreme satisfaction—had it fulfilled its promise?

This moment not Waller should speak to her but Wordsworth, with pensive music :

“ Look at the fate of summer flowers,  
Which blow at daybreak, droop ere even-song :  
And, grieved for their brief date, confess that ours  
Measured by what we are and ought to be,  
Measured by all that, trembling, we foresee,  
Is not so long !

If human life do pass away,  
Perishing, yet more swiftly than the flower,  
Whose frail existence is but of a day :  
What space hath Virgin's beauty to disclose  
Her sweets, and triumph o'er the breathing rose,  
Not even an hour !

The deepest grove whose foliage hid  
The happiest lovers Arcady might boast,  
Could not the entrance of this thought forbid :  
O be thou wise as they, soul-gifted maid !  
Nor rate too high what must so quickly fade,  
So soon be lost !

Then shall Love teach some virtuous youth  
‘ To draw out of the object of his eyes ’  
The whilst on thee they gaze in simple truth,  
Illes more exalted, ‘ a refined form,’  
That dreads not age, nor suffers from the worm,  
And never dies ! ”

—She comes at last. The sun has set, and with it those weird fancies, those vague thoughts that streamed shapelessly through her mind like these long, sad vapours through the twilight sky. Nor, for that moment, is the belle less gay, though more beautiful, nor is Saratoga less charming.

Music flows towards us from the ball-room in languid, luxurious measures, like warm, voluptuous arms wreathing around us and drawing us to the dance. When we enter the hall we find very few people, but at the lower end a sprinkling of New Yorklings are in their heaven.

Dancing is natural and lovely as singing. The court of youth and beauty—with the presence of

brilliantly dressed women, and an air smoothed and softened with delicate and penetrating perfumes, and the dazzling splendour of lights, is a song unsung, a flower not blossomed, until you mingle in movement with the strain—until the scene is so measured by the music that they become one. This has been said so finely by De Quincey that I cannot refrain from enriching my pages with the quotation :

“And in itself, of all the scenes which this world offers, none is to me so profoundly interesting, none (I say deliberately) so affecting, as the spectacle of men and women floating through the mazes of a dance; under these conditions, however, that the music shall be rich and festal, the execution of the dances perfect, and the dance itself of a character to admit of free, fluent and continuous motion. . . . And wherever the music happens to be not of a light, trivial character, but charged with the spirit of festal pleasure, and the performers in the dance so far skilful as to betray no awkwardness verging on the ludicrous, I believe that many persons feel as I feel in such circumstances, viz. derive from the spectacle the very grandest form of passionate sadness which can belong to any spectacle whatsoever. . . . From all which the reader may comprehend, if he should not happen experimentally to have felt, that a spectacle of young men and women *flowing* through the mazes of an intricate dance, under a full volume of music, taken with all the circumstantial adjuncts of such a scene in rich men’s halls, the blaze of lights and jewels, the life, the motion, the sea-like undulation of heads, the interweaving of the figures, the *anakuklosis*, or self-revolving, both of the dance and the music; never ending, still beginning, and the continual regeneration of order from a system of motions which seem for ever to approach the very brink of confusion; that such a spectacle, with such circumstances, may happen to be capable of exciting and sustaining the very grandest emotions of philosophic melancholy to which the human spirit is open.

The reason is in part that such a scene presents a sort of masque of human life, with its whole equipage of pomps and glories, its luxuries of sight and sound, its hours of golden youth, and the interminable revolution of ages hurrying after ages, and one generation treading over the flying footsteps of another, whilst all the while the overruling music attempers the mind to the spectacle,—the subject (as a German would say) to the object, the beholder to the vision. And although this is known to be but one phase of life—of life culminating and in ascent—yet the other and repulsive phasis is concealed upon the hidden or averted side of the golden arras, known but not felt—or is seen but dimly in the rear, crowding into indistinct proportions. The effect of the music is to place the mind in a state of elective-attraction for everything in harmony with its own prevailing key.”

I do not know how far others will acknowledge the justice of this brilliant passage, but to me it gave a thrill of satisfaction when I read it, as the expression of what is often felt in such circumstances. The secret of the feeling is in the entire harmony of the music and the movement—it is that the dancing is the visible form of the infinite and subtle suggestions of the music. Who that has felt the extreme pathos of Strauss's Waltzes but has known them seem to the sensitive imagination, excited by the grace and beauty of women and the odorous brilliancy of a thronged hall, passionate love-lyrics? Nor will you be surprised, if you have been haunted by their sadness as you listened, and especially as you danced to them, to hear that the best are Bohemian and Hungarian songs, wrought into the form of a waltz. The national songs of all people being always in a minor key.

This is a day at Saratoga, and all days there. It is a place for pleasure. The original aim of a visit thither, to drink the waters, is now mainly the excuse of fathers and of the *Habitués*, to whom, however,



summer and Saratoga are synonymous. It is our pleasant social exchange. There we step out of the worn and weary ruts of city society, and mingle in a broad field of various acquaintance. There we may scent the fairest flowers of the south and behold the beauty which is ours, of which we have a right to be proud in Italy and Spain, but which is really less familiar to most of us northerners than Spanish or Italian beauty. There, too, men mingle and learn from contact and sympathy a sweeter temper and a more Catholic consideration, so that the summer flowers we went to wreath may prove not the garland of an hour, but the firmly linked chain of an enduring union.

If you seek health, avoid it if you can; or if you must drink the waters there, take rooms in some other house, not in the "United States," where you will be tortured with the constant vision of the carnival of the high health you have lost. Youth, health and beauty are still the trinity of Saratoga. No old belle ever returns. No girl who was beautiful and famous there, comes as a grandmother to that gay haunt. The ghosts of her blooming days would dance a direful dance around her in the moonlight of the court. Faces that grew sad, and cold, and changed, would look in at her midnight window. Phantoms of promenades, when the wish was spoken rather than the feeling, would make her shudder as she hurried along the piazza. The dull aching sense of youth passed for ever would become suddenly poignant, as she glanced upon the gay groups, gay as she was gay, young and fair no more than she had been. Worst of all, if in some lonely path she met gray-haired, dull-eyed and tottering upon crutches, the handsome and graceful partner of her first Saratoga season.

You will not linger long. A week with Calypso is all that a wise Telemachus will allow himself. But he will not be unjust to its character nor deem it all folly. And if, after dinner, you walk slowly through



the garden with Robert Herrick toward the railroad, by the music and the groups who listen to it, he, watching their youth and beauty, will say to them in farewell, as he did

“TO BLOSSOMS

“Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,  
Why do ye fall so fast?  
Your date is not so past,  
But you may stay yet here awhile  
To blush and gently smile,  
And go at last.

What! were ye born to be  
An hour or half's delight,  
And so to bid good-night?  
'Twas pity Nature brought ye forth  
Merely to show your worth,  
And lose you quite.

But you are lovely leaves, where we  
May read how soon things have  
Their end, tho' ne'er so brave:  
And after they have shown their pride  
Like you, awhile, they glide  
Into the grave.”

LAKE GEORGE

*August.*

AN hour upon the railroad brings you from Saratoga to the Moreau Station. Here you climb a stage-coach to roll across the country to Lake George. It is a fine strip of landscape variously outlined, and with glimpses of beautiful distance. The driver pointed out to us the tree under which Jane McCrea was murdered by the Indians—a lovely spot, meet for so sad a tradition. Between us and the dim-rolling outline of the Green Mountains were the windings of the Hudson, which here, in its infancy,

is a stream of fine promise, and rolled our fancies forward to its beautiful banks below, its dark highlands, its glassy reaches, and the forms of friends on lawns and in gardens along its shores.

We dined at Glen's Falls, which we visited. They are oppressed by the petty tyranny of a decayed dynasty of saw-mills, and the vexed river rages and tumbles among channeled rocks, making a fine spectacle of the Trentonian character. Then we bowled along through a brilliant afternoon toward the Lake. The road is one of the pleasantest I remember. And particularly on that day the grain-fields and the mountains were of the rarest delicacy of tone and texture. Through the trees, an hour from Glen's Falls, I saw a sheet of water, and we emerged upon a fine view of the Lake.

An azure air, of which the water seemed only a part more palpable, set in hills of graceful figure and foliage, and studded with countless isles of romantic beauty—such a picture as imagination touches upon the transparent perfection of summer noons, was my fancy of Lake George.

It was but partly true.

Caldwell is a hamlet at the southern end of the Lake. It is named from an eccentric gentleman, (illiberal obstinacy is always posthumously beatified into eccentricity) who owned the whole region, built a hotel on the wrong spot, determined that no one else should build anywhere, and ardently desired that no more people should settle in the neighbourhood; and, in general, infested the southern shore with a success worthy of a mythological dragon. Instead, therefore, of a fine hotel at the extremity of the Lake, commanding a view of its length, and situated in grounds properly picturesque, there is a house on one side of the end, looking across it to the opposite mountain, and for ever teasing the traveller with wonder that it stands where it does.

The hotel is kept admirably, however, and the faults of position and size are obviated, as far as

possible, by the courtesy and ability of the host. But the increasing throng of travel justifies the erection of an inn equal in every manner to the best. This year the little hamlet was but the "colony" of the hotel, and a mile across the Lake, on the opposite shore, was a small house for the accommodation of the public.

Lake George is a strange lull in excitement after Saratoga. Its tranquillity is like the morning after a ball. There is nothing to do but to bowl or to sit upon the piazza, or to go fishing upon the Lake. It is a good place to study fancy fishermen, who have taken their piscatory degrees in Wall and Pearl-streets. Most of the visitors are guests of a night, but there are also pleasant parties who pass weeks upon the Lake, and listen to the enthusiastic stories of Saratoga as incredulously as to Syren-songs; to whom Saratoga is a name and a vapour, incredible as the fervour of a tropical day to the Russian Empress in her icy palace; parties of a character rare in our country, who do not utterly surrender the summer to luxurious idleness, but steal honey from the flowers as they fly.

And if, strolling upon the piazza, while the moon paves a quivering path across the water, along which throng enchanted recollections, a quiet voice asks if Como's self is more lovely, you are glad to say to one who understands it, your feelings of the difference between European and American scenery. We were watching the water from the piazza, over the low trees in the garden, when the empress said to me, "Now is it not more beautiful than Como?" It was an unfortunate question, because the Lake of Como is the most beautiful lake the traveller sees, and because the details of comparisons were instantly forced upon my mind.

Lake George is a simple mountain lake upon the verge of the wilderness. You ascend from its banks westward and plunge into a wild region. The hills that frame the water are low, and when not bare—

for fires frequently consume many miles of woodland on the hillsides—covered with the stiffly outlined, dark and cold foliage of evergreens. Among these are no signs of life. You might well fancy the populace of the primeval forest yet holding those retreats. You might still dream in the twilight that it were not impossible to catch the ring of a French or English rifle, or the wild whoop of the Indian; sure that the landscape you see, was the same they saw, and their remotest ancestors.

From the water rise the rocks, sometimes solitary and bearing a single tree, sometimes massed into a bowery island.

The boat-boys count the isles of the Lake by the days of the year, and tell you of three hundred and sixty-five. It is a story agreeable enough to hear, but wearisome when the same thing is told at every pretty stretch of islanded water. In the late afternoon or by moonlight, it is pleasant to skim the quiet Lake to the little Tea Island, which has a tree-sheltered cove for harbour and on which stands a ruined temple to T. But whether bohea, or gunpowder, or some more mysterious divinity, the boat-boys reluctant to say, and you must rely on fancy to suggest. I only know, that as we pushed aside the branches that overhang the cove and climbed to the Island and the Temple, we had no sooner set foot upon its floor, and gazed dreamily forth over the Lake, which the moon enchanted, than the slow beat of oars pushed through the twilight, and directly across the moon-paven path of the water shot a skiff with female figures only.

The throb of oars approached, and singing voices mingled with the beat. The boat drove silently into the black shadow of the cove, the singing ceased, and a hushed tumult of low laughter trembled through the trees. For that moment I was a South Sea Islander, a Typeean, a Herman Melville, and down the ruined steps I ran to catch a moonlight glimpse of Fayaway, but saw only the rippling brilliance of the rapidly

fading boat. Therefore I know not what forms they were, nor the moonlight mysteries of Lake George, nor of the little T Island,

“What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape,  
Of Deities, or Mortals, or of both.”

Another day we spread our sails and flew four miles up the Lake to Diamond Island. It has a little stony beach, on which crystals are found, and here also are ruins, but of nothing more stable than Robin Hood's temples. A faded bower, spacious enough for the pavilion of the loveliest May Queen, and romantic enough for a trap of Fancy to catch reveries, is the ruin of the Island.



The brisk wind that blew us rapidly thither drooped as it passed the faded bower, and the lake lapped idly against the stones as we embarked for Caldwell. We drifted homewards in gusts and calms, while a gorgeous sunset streamed from behind the western mountains. It faded into pensive twilight, the very hour of Wordsworth's lines :

“How richly glows the water's breast  
Before us, tinged with evening's hues,  
While, facing thus the crimson West,  
The boat her silent course pursues,

And see how dark the backward stream,  
A little moment past so smiling !  
And still, perhaps with faithless gleam,  
Some other loiterers beguiling.

Such views the youthful bard allure,  
But heedless of the following gloom,  
He dreams their colours shall endure,  
Till peace go with him to the tomb.  
—And let him nurse his fond deceit,  
And what if he must die in sorrow,  
Who would not cherish dreams so sweet,  
Though grief and pain may come to-morrow ?”

All this was pleasant, but all this does not make a lake as beautiful as Como. Here, at Lake George, is no variety of foliage. The solemn evergreens emphasize the fact of a wild primeval landscape. Were there brilliant, full-foliaged chestnuts, or lustrous vines, to vary the monotony of hue, or spiring cypresses and domed stone pines to multiply different forms, or long reaches of terraced shore, the melancholy monotony of impression, which is now so prominent, would be alleviated. The scene is too sad and lonely. The eye is tortured by the doomed ranks of firs and hemlocks, that descend like resigned martyrs to the shore. It is not sublime, it is not the perfection of loneliness, it is not the best of its kind. Yet in the August moonlight the empress asked me if it was not more beautiful than Como.

Consider Como. That strip of water blends the most characteristic Swiss and Italian beauty. From the dark and awful shadow of the Snow-Alps which brood over its northern extremity, the lake stretches under waving vines and shimmering olives, (that look as if they grew only by moonlight, said Mrs. Jameson's niece,)—under orange terraces, and lemons and oleanders, under sumptuous chestnuts and funereal cypresses and ponderous pines and all that they imply of luxurious palaces, marble balusters, steps, statues, vases and fountains, under these and through all the imagery of ideal Italy, deep and far into the very heart of Southern Italian loveliness.

And on the shores near the town of Como, among the garden paths or hills that overhang the villas, you may look from the embrace of Italy straight at the eternal snow-peaks of Switzerland—as if on the divinest midsummer day your thought could cleave the year and behold December as distinctly as June.

Lake Como is the finest combination of natural sublimity and beauty with the artistic results which that sublimity and beauty have inspired. This is the combination essential to a perfect and permanently satisfactory enjoyment in landscape. We modern men cannot be satisfied with the satisfaction of the savage, nor with that of any partial nature and education.

The landscape must be lonely as well as lovely, if it is not sublime. We have a right to require in scenery the presence of the improvement which Nature there suggested. In the Alps, in Niagara, in the Sea, Nature suggests nothing more. They are foregone conclusions. No colossal statue carved from a cliff, or palace hewn from a glacier, are more than curious. Nor can you in any manner improve or deepen by Art the essential impression of natural features so sublime.

When I speak of what Art can do for the landscape, you will not suppose that I wish Nature to be put in order, or that there should be only landscape gardens. The wide flowering levels of the Western Prairies, rolling in billows of golden blossoms upon the horizon, have a supreme and peculiar beauty, which no human touch can improve, and the lonely lakes of the Tyrol, dark withdrawn under cliffs that do not cease to frown, charmed in weird calm which never the scream of wild fowl vexes, these, like the Alps and the Ocean, and Niagara, are beyond the hope of Art.

But it is different when Nature gives no landscape material, when the forms of hill and shore are

monotonous or unimportant of themselves, yet suggest a latent possibility of picturesque effects.

This is not irreverent meddling with Nature, it is only following her lead. Has no one observed how often the absence of water in the landscape leaves the landscape dead? Was never a castle so placed upon hill or by river side that it grieved the eye of taste? What I say aims only at removing the occasion of such grief. The inextricable mazes of a forest are not imposing when you are entangled among them. A boundless forest is only sublime when the eye commands it by overlooking it. The forest is only the rude grandeur of the block; but the groves and gardens which wait upon the civilizing footsteps that unravel those mazes—are the graceful statue and the fine result.

So when the Empress said to me, "Is it not more beautiful than Como?" I said, no. Yet it is impossible not to perceive the great capabilities of Lake George.

The gleam of marble palaces, or of summer retreats of any genuine beauty, even a margin of grain-goldened shore, or ranges of whispering rushes beneath stately terraces—indeed, any amelioration of Nature by Art, would perfect the loveliness of Lake George, and legitimate the Empress's praises. At present it is invested with none of that enchanted atmosphere of romance in which every landscape is more alluring. Its interest and charm is the difference between an Indian and a Greek, between pigments and a picture.

Do not suppose that I am maligning so fair an object as the lake, even while I regard it as a good type of the quality of our landscape, compared with the European. Space and wildness are the proper praises of American scenery. The American in Europe, with the blood of a new race and the hope of a proportioned future tingling in his veins, with a profound conviction that Niagara annihilates all other scenery in the world, and with a decided disposition

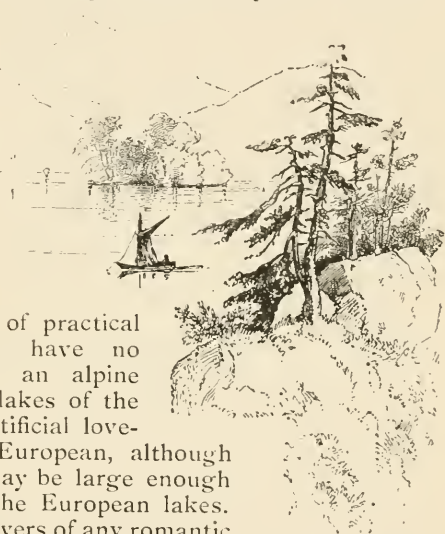


to assert that Niagara is the type of the country, proclaims the extent of that country as the final argument in the discussion of scenery and bears down with inland seas and the Father of Waters, and primeval forests and prairies and Andes, to conclude his triumph.

In the general vague vastness of the impression produced, this is a genuine triumph. But it is a

superiority which appeals more to the mind than to the eye. The moment you travel in America the victory of Europe is sure.

For purposes of practical pleasure we have no mountains of an alpine sublimity, no lakes of the natural and artificial loveliness of the European, although one of ours may be large enough to supply all the European lakes. We have few rivers of any romantic association, no quaint cities, no picturesque costume and customs, no pictures or buildings. We have none of the charms that follow long history. We have only vast and unimproved extent, and the interest with which the possible grandeur of a mysterious future may invest it. One would be loth to exhort a European to visit America for other reasons than social and political observation, or buffalo hunting. We have nothing so grand and accessible as Switzerland, nothing so beautiful as Italy, nothing so civilized as Paris, nothing so com-



fortable as England. The *idea* of the great western rivers and of lakes as shoreless to the eye as the sea, or of a magnificent monotony of grass or forest, is as impressive and much less wearisome than the actual sight of them.

But a charm which is in the variety and the detail, as much as in the general character, is only appreciable by the eye, and that, of course, is the triumph of European scenery. The green valleys of Switzerland which relieve and heighten, by contrast, the snowy sublimity of the mountains; the Madonna shrines in vineyards and the pretty paraphernalia of religion in Italy; the cultivated comfort of the English landscape, in whose parks each tree stands as if it knew itself to be the ornament and pride of ancestral acres, and the artificial grotesqueness of the French châteaux—all these you must see if you would know, and your final impression is of a fine aggregate with beautiful and characteristic details.

Then we have no coast scenery. The Mediterranean coast has a character which is unequalled. The sea loves Italy and laves it with beauty. It has an eternal feud with us. Our shores stretch, shrinking in long, low flats, to the ocean, or recoil in bare, gray, melancholy rocks. Our coast is monotonous and tame in form, and sandy and dreary in substance. Trees reluct to grow; fruit yearns for the interior; a sad dry moss smooths the rocks and solitary spires of grass shiver in the wind. But the Italian sea is mountain-shored; and all over the mountain sides the oranges grow, and the tropical cactus and vines wave, and a various foliage fringes the water. You float at morning and evening on the Gulf of Salerno, or the Bay of Naples, and breathe an orange-odoured air. The vesper bell of the convent on the steep sides of the Salerno mountains showers with pious sound the mariners below. They watch the campanile as they sail, and a sweetness of which their own gardens make part, follows their flight. You can fancy nothing more alluring than

these coasts, and nothing more mysterious and imposing than the mountains of Granada looming large through the luminous mist of the Spanish shore. This last is the scenery of Ossian.

All this implies one of the grandest and most beautiful natural impressions, and one of which our own sea-coast is totally destitute. And it is only an illustration of the absolute superiority of European scenery, in very various ways. The tendency of American artists toward Europe as a residence, is based not only upon the desire of breathing a social atmosphere, in which Art is valued, or of beholding the galleries of fame, but also upon the positive want of the picturesque in American scenery and life. Water, and woods, and sky are not necessarily picturesque in form, or combination, or colour, and here again, there must be beautiful details, and the human impress of Art upon them, to satisfy the sense that craves the picturesque.

I sat one evening on the cliffs at Newport with Mot Notelpa, a friend who wears the onyx ring, of which Sterling has written so good a story—and as we were discussing America, Mot, the gentleman of two hemispheres, said to me: "America is only a splendid exile for the European race." The saying was no less forcible than fine, but I have no room to follow its meaning here. He did not say or mean that it was a pity to be born an American, or deny the compensation which gives us our advantages.

No man who has traversed Europe with his eyes and mind open has failed to see that as our great natural advantage is space, so our great social and political advantage is opportunity, and every young man's capital the chance of a career. But the race as a unit, cultivated to the point of Art, is exiled, wherever the laws of Nature postpone Art.

You may be sure that I said no such thing to the Empress, as in the moonlight she provoked the comparison.

But the "No" of my reply meant all that. And

when, the next morning, we steamed in a stiff gale from Caldwell to Crown Point, the unhumanized solitude of the shores accorded well with the dusky legends of Indian wars that haunt the Lake.

Lake George should be the motto of a song rather than the text of a sermon, I know. But it is beautiful enough to make moralizing poetry. It is the beauty of a country cousin, the diamond in the rough, when compared with the absolute elegance and fascination of Como. Nor will I quarrel with those whom the peasant pleases most—especially if they have never been to court.

## NAHANT

*September.*

“ Oh ! which were best, to roam or rest ?  
The land's lap or the water's breast ?  
To sleep on yellow millet-sheaves,  
Or swim in lucid shallows, just  
Eluding water-lily leaves,  
An inch from Death's black fingers, thrust  
To lock you, whom release he must ;  
Which life were best on Summer eves ? ”

NAHANT is a shower of little brown cottages, fallen upon the rocky promontory that terminates Lynn Beach.

There is a hotel upon its finest, farthest point, which was a fashionable resort a score of years since. But the beaux and belles have long since retreated into the pretty cottages whence they can contemplate the hotel, which has the air of a quaint, broad-piazzad, sea-side hostelry, with the naked ugliness of a cotton factory added to it, and fancy it the monument of merry, but dead old days.

The hotel is no longer fashionable. Nahant is no more a thronged resort. Its own career has not

been unlike that of the belles who frequented it, for although the hurry and glare and excitement of a merely fashionable watering-place are past, there has succeeded a quiet, genial enjoyment and satisfaction, which are far pleasanter. Some sunny morning, when your memory is busy with Willis's sparkling stories of Nahant life a quarter of a century ago, and with all the pleasant tales you may have collected in your wanderings, from those who were a part of that life, then step over with some friend, whose maturity may well seem to you the flower of all that the poet celebrated in the bud, and she will reanimate the spacious and silent piazza with the forms that have made it famous. And ever as you stroll and listen, your eyes will wander across the irregular group of cottages, and prohibit your fancying that the romance is over.

This is a kind of sentiment inseparable from spots like this. They concentrate, during a brief time, so many and such various persons, and unite them so closely in the constant worship and pursuit of a common pleasure, that the personal association with the spot becomes profound; and when the space is very limited, as at Nahant, even painful. It is not surprising, therefore, that many who loved and frequented Nahant years ago, now recoil from it, and only visit it with the same fascinated reluctance with which they regard the faded love-tokens of years so removed that they seem to have detached themselves from life. This will explain to you much of the surprise with which Bostonians listen to your praises of Nahant. "Is anything left?" say their smiles and looks; "it is a cup we drained so long ago."

Yet no city has an ocean-gallery, so near, so convenient and rapid of access, so complete and satisfactory in characteristics of the sea, as Boston in Nahant.

You step upon the steamer in the city and in less than an hour you land at Nahant, and breathe the untainted air from the "boreal pole," and gaze upon

a sublime sea-sweep, which refreshes the mind as the air the lungs. You find no village, no dust, no commotion. You encounter no crowds of carriages or of curious and gossiping people. No fast men in velvet coats are trotting fast horses. You meet none of the disagreeable details of a fashionable watering-place, but a sunny silence broods over the realm of little brown cottages. They stand apart at easy distances, each with its rustic piazza, with vines climbing and blooming about the columns, with windows and doors looking upon the sea.

In the midst of the clusters, where roads meet, stands a small Temple, a church of graceful proportions, but unhappily clogged with wings. It is the only Catholic Church I know, for all services are held there in rotation, from the picturesque worship of the Roman faith to the severest form of Protestantism. The green land slopes away behind the Temple to a row of willows in a path across the field, whence you cannot see the ocean, and it is so warm and sheltered, like an inland dell, that the sound of the sea comes to it only as a pleasant fancy.

This pretty path ends in the thickest part of the settlement. But even here it has no village air. It is still, and there are no shops, and the finest trees upon the promontory shadow the road that gradually climbs the hill, and then, descending, leads you across little Nahant to Lynn Beach. The area of Nahant is very small. From almost any cottage porch you survey the whole scene. But it has these two great advantages for a summer sojourn: an air of entire repose, for there seems to be no opportunity or convenience for any other than a life of leisure, and the perpetual presence of the sea.

At Nahant you cannot fancy poverty or labour. Their appearance is elided from the landscape. Taking the tone of your reveries from the peaceful little Temple and glancing over the simple little houses, with the happy carelessness of order in their distribution, and the entire absence of smoke, dust, or din,

you must needs dream that Pericles and Aspasia have withdrawn from the capital, with a choice court of friends and lovers, to pass a month of Grecian gaiety upon the sea. The long day swims by nor disturbs that dream. If haply upon the cliffs at sunset, straying by "the loud-sounding sea," you catch glimpses of a figure, whose lofty loveliness would have inspired a sweeter and statelier tone in that old verse, you feel only that you have seen Aspasia, and Aspasia as the imagination beholds her, and are not surprised; or a head wreathed with folds of black splendour varies that pure Greek rhythm with a Spanish strain,—or cordial Saxon smiles and ringing laughter dissolve your Grecian dream into a western reality.

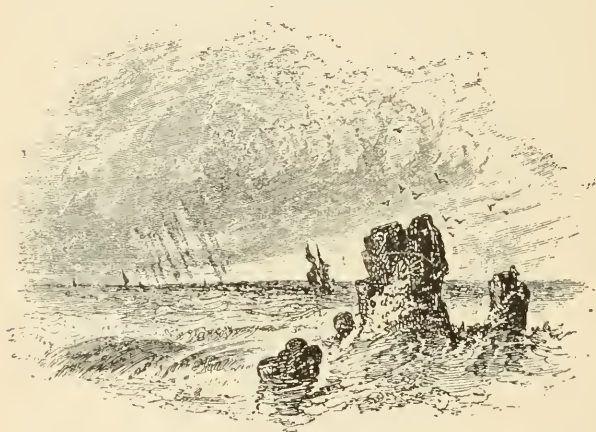
For its sea, too, Nahant is unsurpassed. You cannot escape the Ocean here. It is in your eye and in your ear for ever. At Newport the Ocean is a luxury. You live away from it and drive to it as you drive to the Lake at Saratoga, and in the silence of midnight as you withdraw from the polking parlour, you hear it calling across the solitary fields, wailing over your life and wondering at it. At Nahant the sea is supreme. The place is so small that you cannot build your house out of sight of the Ocean, and to watch the splendid play of its life, is satisfaction and enjoyment enough. Many of the cottages are built directly on the rocks of the shore. Of course there are few trees, except the silver poplar, which thrives luxuriantly in the salt air, and which, waving in the fresh wind and turning its glistening leaves to the sun, is like a tree in perpetual blossom. Flowers are cherished about some of the houses, and they have an autumnal gorgeousness and are doubly dear and beautiful on the edge of the salt sea waste.

The air which the ocean breathes over the spot is electrical. No other ocean-air is so exhilarating. After breakfast at Nahant, said Mot, I feel like Cœur de Lion, and burn to give battle to the Saracens. But the brave impulse ends in smoke, and



musings and chatting, and building castles in the clouds, you loiter away the day upon the piazza, ending by climbing about the cliffs at sunset or galloping over the beach. Thus the ocean and the cliffs are the natural glories of Nahant, and the sky which you see as from the deck of a ship, and which adequately completes the simple outline of the world as seen from those rocks.

The cliffs are imposing. They are the jagged black edges of rock with which the promontory tears



the sea. Chased by the tempests beyond, the ocean dashes in and leaping upon the rocks lashes them with the fury of its scorn. In a great gale the whole sea drives upon Nahant.

One day the storm came, sullen and showery from the East, scudding in blinding mists over the sea, breaking towards the blue,—struggling, wailing, howling, losing the blue again, with a sharper chill in its breath and a drearier dash of the surf. Then an awful lull, an impenetrable mist, and the hoarse gathering roar of the ocean. The day darkened, and sudden sprays of rain, like volleys of sharp arrows,



rattled gustily against the windows, and dull, booming thunder was flattened and dispersed in the thick moisture of the air. But in the gust and pauses of the wind and rain, the bodeful roar of the sea was constant and increasing. The water was invisible, except in the long flashing lines of surf that momentarily plunged from out the gray gloom of the fog, and that surf was like the advancing lines of an unknown enemy flinging itself upon the shore. Behind was the mighty rush of multitudinous waters, but more awful to imagination than any mere natural sound could be, for all the dead and lost, all who sailed and never came to shore, all who dreamed, and hoped, and struggled, and went down, and a world of joy with them; all their woe was in the Ocean's wail, the death shriek of as much happiness as lives. So the storm gathered terribly over the sea, in terror commensurate with the sea's vastness, and beat upon Nahant like a hail of fire upon a besieged citadel.

The next day, as children seek upon a battle-field the buttons and ornaments that adorned the heroes, there were figures bending along the shore, to find the delicate, almost impalpable mosses, which the agony of the sea tosses up, as fragments of song drop from the torture of the heart. The mosses are pressed and cherished in volumes, each of which is a book of songs—of the airiest fancies—of the aptest symbols—of the delicatest dreams of the sea. Nothing in nature is more touching and surprising, nothing more richly reveals her tenderness than these fair-threaded and infinitely various sea-weeds and mosses. They are the still, small voices, in which is the Lord.

Longfellow has sung all this in wave-dancing music :

“So when storms of wild emotion  
Strike the Ocean  
Of the poet's soul, ere long  
From each cave and rocky fastness,  
In its vastness,  
Floats some fragment of a Song.

## Lotus-Eating

From the far off Isles enchanted,  
 Heaven has planted  
 With the golden fruit of Truth ;  
 From the flashing surf, whose vision  
 Gleams Elysian  
 In the tropic clime of Youth.

From the strong will and the endeavour,  
 That for ever  
 Wrestles with the tides of Fate ;  
 From the wreck of Hopes far-scattered,  
 Tempest-shattered,  
 Floating waste and desolate.

Ever-drifting, drifting, drifting,  
 On the shifting  
 Currents of the restless heart ;  
 Till at length in books recorded,  
 They, like hoarded  
 Household words, no more depart."

Nahant would not satisfy a New Yorker, nor, indeed, a Bostonian, whose dreams of sea-side summering are based upon Newport life. The two places are entirely different. It is not quite true that Newport has all of Nahant and something more. For the repose, the freedom from the fury of fashion, is precisely what endears Nahant to its lovers, and the very opposite is the characteristic of Newport.

Nahant is northern in character, and Newport is southern. The winds blow cool over Nahant, and you think of the North Sea, and Norsemen, and Vikings, and listen to the bracing winds as to Sagas.

Yet, if a man had any work to do, Nahant opens its arms to him, and folds him into the sweetest silence and seclusion. It has no variety, I grant. You stroll along the cliffs, and you gallop upon the beach, and there is nothing more. But he is a Tyro in the observation of Nature, who does not know that, by the sea, it is the sky-scape and not the landscape in which enjoyment lies. If a man dwelt in the vicinity of beautiful inland scenery, yet near the sea, his horse's head would be turned daily to the ocean,

for the sea and sky are exhaustless in interest as in beauty, while, in the comparison, you soon drink up the little drop of satisfaction in fields and trees. The sea externally fascinates by its infinite suggestion, and every man upon the sea-shore is still a Julian or a Maddalo :

——“because the sea  
Is boundless as we wish our souls to be.”

Besides, it is always the ocean which is the charm of other shore resorts, that have more variety than Nahant. Even at Newport the eye is unsatisfied until it rests upon the sea, and as sea-side scenery with us is monotonous, there is rather more of the same thing at Newport than a greater variety. The genuine objection to Nahant is the feeling of dullness, on the part of the young, and of its intense sadness of association with the elders.

The air is full of ghosts to them. At twilight they see figures glide pallid along the cliffs, and hear vague voices singing airy songs by moonlight in the rocky caves of the shore. Every stone, every turn is so familiar, that the absence of the look and the word, which in memory are integral parts of every rock and turn, sharpen the sense of change into acute sorrow.

Nor to the visitor of to-day, who hears the stories of old Nahant days as he reads romances, is it possible to watch without tenderness of thought, even without a kind of sadness, if you will, the pleasant evening promenade along the Lynn Beach. They bound over the beach in the favouring sunset, those graceful forms, fresh and unworn as the sea that breaks languidly beside them and slips smoothly to their horses' hoofs. I do not wonder that it slips so softly toward them and touches their flight as with a musing kiss. I do not wonder that it breaks balmily upon their cheeks, and lifts their hair as lightly as if twilight spirits were toying with their locks. I do not wonder that as they turn homeward in the moonlight and leave the sea alone, it calls gently after

them and fills the air with soft sounds as they retire, nor that it rises and rises until it has gathered into its bosom the light tracks they left upon the shore. The sea knows the brevity of that glad bound along the beach. These are not the first, they shall surely not be the last, and while itself shall stay for ever fresh and unworn as now, there shall be furrows ploughed elsewhere which even its waves can never smooth.

The evenings at Nahant have a strange fascination. There are no balls, no hops, no concerts, no congregating under any pretence in hotel parlours. The damp night air is still, or throbs with the beating sea. The Nahanters sit upon their piazzas and watch the distant lighthouse or the gleam of a lantern upon a sail. Gradually they retire. Lights fade from the windows. Before midnight, silence and darkness are supreme. But we who remembered Sorrento loved the midnight, and, singing barcaroles, dreamed our dreams.

One night we sang no longer, but lost in silence watched the bay as if it had been the bay of Naples, when the sudden burst of a distant serenade filled the midnight. It was the golden crown of delight. The long, wailing, passionate strains floated around us, as if our own thoughts had grown suddenly audible, and the vague sadness, the nameless and inexpressible fascination of midnight music utterly enthralled us. Nothing but the music lived; the world was its own; we floated upon it, drifted hither and thither as it would. There was no moon, but the serenade was moonlight. There were no gardens to sweeten the night, but the music was a bower of Persian roses thronged with nightingales. Songs of Mendelssohn—the *Adelaide* of Beethoven—Irish melodies, whatever was melancholy, and exquisite, and meet for the hour and the spot, pulsed towards us upon the night,—and last of all, a wild, sweet, pensive strain, for which surely Shelley meant his lines :

"I arise from dreams of thee,  
In the first sweet sleep of night,  
When the winds are breathing low,  
And the stars are shining bright.  
I arise from dreams of thee,  
And a spirit in my feet  
Has led me—who knows how?  
To thy chamber window, sweet !

The wandering airs they faint  
On the dark, the silent stream—  
The champak odours fail  
Like sweet thoughts in a dream ;  
The nightingale's complaint,  
It dies upon her heart,  
As I must on thine,  
Beloved as thou art.

O lift me from the ground,  
I die, I faint, I fail !  
Let thy Love in kisses rain  
On my lips and eyelids pale.  
My cheek is cold, and white, alas !  
My heart beats loud and fast,  
Oh ! press it close to thine again,  
Where it will break at last."

At Nahant you shall live with the sea and sky and yet not lose that pleasant social intercourse, which has a secret sweeter than the sea or the sky can whisper. Society at Nahant does not imply the Polka, indeed, that last perfection of civilization, but regard it, if you choose, as the ante-chamber to the ball-room of Newport, where you may breathe the fresh air awhile, and collect your thoughts, and see the ocean and the stars, and remember with regret the days when happiness was in something else than a dance, the days when you dared to dream.

Nor be surprised, if, as you linger on those cliffs, remembering, one of the ghosts the elders see should lay his light hand upon your shoulder, and whisper as the sun sets.

"Break, break, break,  
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea !  
And I would that my tongue could utter  
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisher boy,  
That he sings in his boat on the bay,  
O well for the sailor lad,  
That he shouts with his sister at play.

And the stately ships go on,  
To their haven under the hill ;  
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still.

Break, break, break,  
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea !  
But the tender grace of a day that is fled  
Will never come back to me."

## NEWPORT

*September.*

THE Golden Rods begin to flame along the roadsides, and in the pleasant gardens of Newport. The gorgeous dahlias and crisp asters marshal the autumnal splendour of the year. All day long, Herrick's "Valedictory to the Summer" has been singing itself in my mind :

"Fair daffodils, we weep to see  
You haste away so soon,  
As yet the early rising Sun  
Has not attained his noon.  
Stay, stay,  
Until the hastening day  
Has run ;  
But to the even song,  
And having prayed together, we  
Will go with you along !  
We have short time to stay as you,  
We have as short a Spring,  
As quick a growth to meet decay,  
As you or any thing.  
We die  
As your hours do ; and dry  
Away  
Like to the Summer's rain,  
Or as the pearls of morning-dew,  
Ne'er to be found again."

The first chill breath of September has blown away the froth of fashion, and the cottagers anticipate with delight the cool serenity of the shortening days. The glory has utterly gone from that huge, yellow pagoda-factory, the Ocean House. The drop has fallen, the audience is departed, the lights are extinguished, and it were only to be wished that the house might vanish with the season, and not haunt "the year's last hours" with that melancholy aspect of a shrineless, deserted temple.

I fear, however, that not only the glory of a season, but of success, has left the "Ocean." The flame of fashion which burned there a year or two since, burned too intensely to last. The fickle goddess, whose temple it is, is already weary of democratic, congregational worship and affects the privacy of separate oratories. They rise on every hand. For fashion dwells in cottages now, and the hotel season is brief and not brilliant. The cottagers will come, indeed, and hear the Germania play, and hop in the parlour; but they come as from private palaces to a public hall, and disappear again into the magnificent mystery of "cottage life."

When I first knew Newport it was a southern resort for the summer. The old Bellevue, and the present Touro House, then Whitfield's, sufficed for the strangers. It was before the Polka—before the days of music after dinner—and when the word "hop" was unknown even at Saratoga. Everybody bathed in those days, and all bathed together. There was a little bowling, some driving and riding, but no fast horses or fast men—above all, no fast women. The area on the hill, of which the Ocean House is the centre, was an unsettled region. There were not a dozen cottages, and the quaint little town dozed quietly along its bay, dreaming only of the southern silence, which the character of the climate and of the visitors, who were mainly southerners, naturally suggested.

Newport was the synonym of repose. An in-

genious commentator would surely have traced the Van Winkles to a Newport origin, although as surely, the "Rip" was a soubriquet of prophetic omen.

In those good old days New York loved Saratoga, and Newport was a name of no significance: but the Diana of that Ephesus looked suddenly seaward, and a flood tide of fashion rose along Narragansett Bay, and overflowed Newport.

Singular are the deposits it left and is leaving. This amorphous "Ocean"; this Grecian "Atlantic"; this "Bellevue" enlarged out of all recognizable proportions; this whirl of fashionable equipages, these hats and coats, this confused din of dancing music, scandal, flirtation, serenades, and supreme voice of the sea breaking through the fog and dust; this singing, dancing, and dawdling incessantly; this crushing into a month in the country that which crowds six months in town—these are the foot-prints of Fashion upon the sea-shore—these the material with which we build the golden statue to our Diana.

Beyond doubt, Newport is the great watering-place of the country. And as such, as assembling yearly the allied army of fashionable forces from every quarter, it is the most satisfactory point from which to review the host and mark the American aspect of Fashion.

A very little time will reveal its characteristic to be exaggeration. The intensity, which is the natural attribute of a new race, and which finds in active business its due direction, and achieves there its truest present success, becomes ludicrous in the social sphere, because it has no taste and no sense of propriety.

Society is as much a sphere of art as any of the more recognized spheres. To be rich, and to visit certain persons, no more fits a man or woman for society, than to be twenty years old and to have a palette fits him to be an artist. When, therefore, a boy embarks in business at ten years of age and



retires a man at forty or fifty with a fortune, he is in the situation of one who in the passionate pursuit of the means has put the end out of his attainment. He has been so long making his shoes that by inaction his feet are withered, and he cannot walk. Yet the same man, who can never be an addition or an ornament to society, which demands the harmonious play of rare gifts, shall be very eminent and useful in that active life which requires the stern labour of very different powers.

Thus, as wealth is a primal necessity of society, because giving it a pedestal, and allowing its generous whims and fancies full play, so wherever wealth is not an antecedent, but must be acquired, the force and maturity of talent will always be swallowed up in the pedestal, and the statue will be light and imperfect, or, what is worse, an imbecile imitation. In a society formed under such circumstances, wealth will always enjoy an unnatural and undignified consideration.

Now the test of a man is his manner of using means, not of acquiring them. Any adroit labourer can quarry marble, but how many men could have wrought the Apollo or the Venus? And how many men who have made fortunes spend money well?

I do not imply that they are not generous, and even lavish; but how much does the expenditure advance the great common interests of men? In this country where fortunes are yearly made and spent, what results of that spending have we to show? We have carriages, and upholstery, and dinners, and elaborate houses, and the waistcoats of Young America blaze with charms, and it returns from "abroad" with a knowledge of Parisian tailoring and haberdashery, which would be invaluable in the first Broadway establishment interested in those matters.

But consider that we get few pictures, statues, buildings, gardens, or parks, for the money we spend; consider that no rich man has yet thought to endow this country with a museum of casts, like the

Meng's Museum in Dresden, by which we should have all the finest sculptures of every age in the most perfectly accurate copy, only differing from the original in the material.

"I have made my money, and I am not going to throw it away," is the response of Cræsus to any such suggestion; and he builds a house in the most fashionable street rather larger than his neighbour's, but a reproduction of it in every unholstering detail.

Fine plate and glass, and Louis Quinze and Louis Quatorze deformities follow, and Cræsus, Jr., has a pair of 2.40's, and a wagon of weight proportioned to the calibre of that young gentleman; and, as he dashes up the Newport dust, some cynical pedestrian Timon, whitened and blinded by that dust, cannot help inquiring if this is the best statue that could be wrought out of all the marble old Cræsus quarried!

The houses, and horses, and carriages are not to be derided; for, as I said already, these are the pedestal; they are the matters of course. But to the eye of the money-making genius, they are valuable for themselves, and not as means, and there is the necessary mistake of a society so constituted. If a man buys a luxurious carpet, not that his friends may tread softly and their sense be soothed, but that it may proclaim his ability to buy the carpet, that it may say with green and red and yellow emphasis—"at least twenty thousand a year"—it is no longer beautiful, and you feel the presence of a man who is mastered by his means, and to whom any other man with a larger rent roll will be respectable and awful.

From all this spring the ludicrous details of our society. We dress too well; we dance too well: we are too gracious and graceful; our entertainments are too elegant; our modesty degenerates into prudery and bad taste; we are "smart," but not witty; flashy, but not gay.—Young America is too young. Its feet are beautifully small, and the head is proportioned to them. Society is only a ball. The heels have carried it against the head; and why not, since the education

and daily life of the youth fits him for little else than shaking his heels adroitly.

We dance because we are unable to talk. The novels of foreign society fascinate us by their tales of a new sphere. Where are such women, we say, where such men? We fancy it is the despairing dream of a romance, but it is really the fact of foreign life.—We are very chivalric; no nation reaches our point of courtly devotion to woman as woman. But our chivalry is not entirely unfeudalized; our courtliness does not always indicate respectful intercourse.



When I say that we dance too well, I speak of the disproportion of those performances to the rest of our social achievements. A fool crowned is doubly foolish. Fine dressing and dexterous dancing, when not subsidiary to the effect of personal beauty and character, are monstrous. Every girl who dances gracefully, should, in speaking, show that she is of graceful and winning nature. If she does not—if she is silly and simpers—you instinctively feel that her movement is artificial; that it is the gift of the dancing school, not a grace of nature; you have been deceived, and it is never again a pleasure to watch that dancing.

What is high society but the genial intercourse of the highest intelligences with which we converse? It is the festival of Wit and Beauty and Wisdom. Its conversation is a lambent light playing over all subjects, as the torch is turned upon each statue in the gallery. It is not an arena for dispute. Courts and Parliaments are for debate. Its hall of reunion, whether Holland House, or Charles Lamb's parlour, or Schiller's garret, or the Tuileries, is a palace of pleasure. Wine, and flowers, and all successes of art, delicate dresses studded with gems, and graceful motion to passionate and festal music, are its ornaments and arabesqued outlines. It is a tournament wherein the force of the hero is refined into the grace of the gentleman—a masque, in which womanly sentiment blends with manly thought. This is the noble idea of society, a harmonious *play* of the purest powers. Nothing less than this satisfies the demand suggested by human genius and beauty, and the splendid sphere of the world in which they are placed.

Yes, you say, and how much of all this have you found in Newport?

At least I have found the form of it; and he must have travelled in vain, who could not see, on some Grecian summer morning, even thus late in time, Alcibiades heading, with silken sails, for the Peireus, or here in Newport the features of a truly fine society through the fog of fashion.

The very exaggeration we have remarked betrays a tendency as well as a failure. When we have gone through our present discipline of French and English social bullying, from the shape of our shoes up to that of our opinions, we shall be the stronger to take the field for ourselves. Yet I doubt if in any country in which wealth is not hereditary, so that a permanent and large class is secure from the necessity of some kind of gold digging, whereby man becomes of the earth, earthy, there can ever be the simplest and finest tone of society. The aggregate will be better, but will the single specimens be as good?

I do not insist upon it. It is a speculation. Yet, perhaps, this perfection of the individual is the jewel in the toad's head—the real result of the elaborate aristocratic organization of the old world, which, I grant, was too cumbrous an operation for such a result.

The old mystery, myth, fable, fancy, or whatever else, that labour came by the fall, will still suggest itself. We make the best of a bad case, and poets and philosophers speculate how to make labour "attractive." But the end of our labour is, all the while, to dispense with labour.

"You lazy fellow," says the working merchant to his friend who was an heir. "But why are you working," retorts the heir upon the merchant, "but to secure the laziness I enjoy?"

At all events, hard labour, in any fair sense of the word, is incompatible with the finest beauty, whether personal or intellectual, and therefore with the most delicate bloom of society. But we Americans are workers by the nature of the case, or sons of labourers, who spend foolishly what they wisely won. And, therefore, New York, as the social representative of the country, has more than the task of Sisyphus. It aims, and hopes, and struggles, and despairs, to make wealth stand for wit, wisdom and beauty. In vain it seeks to create society by dancing, dressing, and dining, by building fine houses and avoiding the Bowery. Fine society is not exclusive, does not avoid, but all that does not belong to it drops away like water from a smooth statue.—We are still peasants and parvenues, although we call each other princes and build palaces. Before we are three centuries old we are endeavouring to surpass, by imitating, the results of all art and civilization and social genius beyond the sea. By elevating the standard of expense, we hope to secure select society, but have only aggravated the necessity of a labour integrally fatal to the kind of society we seek.

It would be unfortunate if we were all drones, and

it is foolish for any man to speak of labour in general as inimical to society. But I speak of that labour which is really drudgery, which is unfair to a man's intellectual nature. Hans Sachs was a shoemaker, but it is no less true that incessant hammering of sole leather also hammers the cobbler's just development away.

One extreme is as bad as the other. The drudge whose life is drained away in the inexorable toil of a mine or a factory, is as sad an object as the prodigal, whom wealth softens into imbecility. The polar zone freezes, the tropics burn, the realms of the equator sleep in golden calm between.

Fine Society is a fruit that ripens slowly. We Americans fancy we can buy it. But you might as well go to market for fresh peaches in January. Noble aims and sincere devotion to them—the highest development of mind and heart—the fine aroma of cultivation which springs from the intimacy with all that human genius has achieved in every kind—simplicity and integrity—a soul whose sweetness overflows in the manner and makes the voice winning and the movement graceful—here is the recipe for fine society, and although much of this is impossible, as for instance, high and various cultivation, without wealth, yet wealth of itself cannot supply the lowest element. The wealth of a foolish man is a pedestal which the more he accumulates elevates him higher, and reveals his deformity to a broader circle.

These most obvious facts are rarely remembered. Gilded vulgarity believes itself to be gold. But in vain we "cut" and discriminate and eschew, now warmly here and coldly there, as if many a Marquis of unsullied blood did not dine for ten cents in Florence, and lie abed while his shirt was washed, and then enter the saloons of fashion as a King his Council Chamber.

We separate and exclude, as if some fine morning the little blackamoor of a sweep would not climb

down the chimney, and fall naturally asleep on the best bed, soot and all, though he may never have touched linen since the sheets of his cradle.

We Americans are gifted with the talent of getting rich. But the money-making is not the money-spending genius, and the former nourishes a love of wealth as an end, which is a love fatal to society. We are not peculiar in our regard for money, but we are in the *exclusiveness* of our regard for it. Wealth will socially befriend a man at Newport or Saratoga, better than at any similar spot in the world, and that is the severest censure that could be passed upon those places.

But life at Newport is not all moralizing, even with the cynical Timons of which I spoke, and if you will regard this chapter as our chat after dinner, upon the piazza, in the next we will stroll in the pleasant places of Newport.

## NEWPORT, AGAIN

*September.*

THIS Island was originally called Rhode Island from some fancied resemblance in its climate to that of the Isle of Rhodes. I do not wonder at the suggestion, for Newport is washed by a southern sea and the air that breathes over it is soft and warm. Its climate is an Italian air. These are Mediterranean days. They have the luxurious languor of the South. Only the monotonous and melancholy coast reminds you that you are not gazing upon Homer's sea, and that the wind is not warmed by African sands. All day—if you have been in Italy and know its southern shore,—you look for the orange groves and vineyards; all night you listen for the barcaroles.

I heard a simple and natural explanation of the



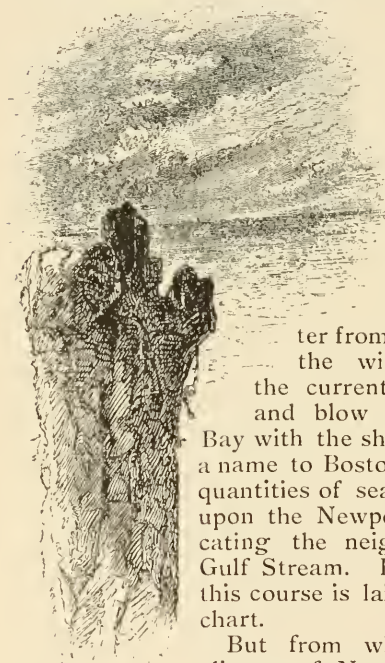
softness of the Newport climate, which attributed it to the immediate neighbourhood of the Gulf Stream. The current suddenly diverges westward near the Island, and, according to the story, actually touches it. Hence the warmer weather and softer airs here

than at spots not far removed, especially Nahant. Upon leaving Newport the line of the Gulf Stream stretches westward, leaving a broad space of sea between itself and the Massachusetts shore, into which flows the cold water

from the north, by which the winds warmed over the current are again chilled, and blow into Massachusetts

Bay with the sharp sting that gives a name to Boston east winds. Vast quantities of sea-weed are driven in upon the Newport coast, also indicating the neighbourhood of the Gulf Stream. If I do not mistake, this course is laid down in Maury's chart.

But from whatever cause, the climate of Newport is very bland and beautiful. It is called bracing, but it is only pure. From the higher land of the interior of the island you may see the ocean, any sunny day, basking and sparkling in the light, seemingly girding the island with a broad visible belt of warmth. If you see it across smooth, lawn-like slopes, with a cluster of trees, as towards the Spouting Horn, it will fascinate you no less than Undine was fascinated,





and draw you to the shore. Follow it and incline toward the Fort. Pass the numerous gates, gallop along the hard avenue toward Bateman's, and push on to the shore beyond. Then slowly pace along the rocky marge.

The waves tumble in here, fresh and full from the mid-sea. To the right is the southern shore of the mainland, and by the lighthouse upon Beaver-Tail pass the sloops and schooners heading toward Long Island Sound. It is not a friendly coast; for at a little distance in the sea the waves break and foam over hidden rocks. That ledge is Brenton's Reef, and here in the sand, on the very shore, stand two head stones, side by side. Their silence tells the same story as the fretfulness of the rock-rent waves beyond. If you can cross a stream that intervenes, and are not appalled by stone walls, you may still keep the shore, and skirting Lily Pond which has the stern aspect of a solitary mountain tarn, and is only separated from the sea by a strip of sand, you emerge upon the crescent beach of the Spouting Horn, a throat of rock in the cliff, through which, from a narrow cave below, the water, during storms, is forced some forty or fifty feet into the air.

Just beyond the Spouting Horn is the southern point of the Island. It is a rocky bluff, planted now in corn, but from the highest point commanding an unobstructed horizon, including the town removed into picturesque distance, and the intermediate reaches of green field, sprinkled with occasional groups of trees. The cliffs around the Spouting Horn are magnificent ocean features, and the shore of the mainland is visible. The sea-sweep enfolds all, satisfying eye and mind.

This is the true site of a Newport residence. The situation suggests a cottage of the same general character as the Nahant houses. No one could go beyond you, no one could interfere, and, in the present rapid settlement of the island, it will not be long before it is occupied. A little farther on are the

finest cliffs in Newport, upon which, after southerly storms, the sea dashes itself in magnificent surfs that set the shore in flashing foam. These are the haunts of the bass fishers. We have left our horses behind, for there is only a foot-path along the cliffs, and walls and fences must be scaled. But by a happy old condition of the sale of these lands, the path will long remain public. For when the colonists took the land from the Indians, a right of way along the sea was secured to them for ever, for fishing and the gathering of sea-weed. At least so runs the tradition at Newport, and the convenient stiles and holes in the walls, even upon properties already settled, confirm its practical truth.

—Or is it only, perhaps, that no man upon this pleasant island feels that he has the right to exclude others from the sea-shore,—the sea, like the air, being the only unquestioned universal heritage in Nature? The fields upon the cliffs are flat and treeless. A dry, crisp grass carpets them quite to the edge of the precipice. It is thus the finest ocean-walk, for it is elevated sufficiently for the eye to command the water, and is soft and grateful to the feet, like inland pastures. No enterprise has yet perceived that the true situation for a Newport hotel is upon these cliffs. A broad piazza over the sea would brook no rival in attraction, and the citizen who sought the place for the ocean air, and the ocean view, would not turn without a sigh, back into the dusty road, upon which stands, out of the ocean's sight and sound, the glaring, amorphous pile which is his home for the nonce.

In the serene beauty of September weather, the cliffs are doubly beautiful. Fashion, the Diana of the Summer Solstice, is dethroned; that golden statue is shivered, and its fragments cast back into the furnace of the city, to be again fused and moulded; and out of the whirring dust and din the loiterer emerges into the meditative autumnal air.

“A feeling of sadness,” says Coleridge, “a peculiar

melancholy, is wont to take possession of me alike in Spring and in Autumn. But in Spring it is the melancholy of hope; in Autumn it is the melancholy of resignation." Strolling among these dry fields, upon the sea, you may perceive plainly enough the difference. In the beginning of the month, a cluster of days, like a troop of tropical birds, with fiery breath and plumage, breathed torrid airs over the island. It was the final ecstasy and festival of summer. But a huge, black cloud gathered one Saturday afternoon, and with lightning and flooding rain dispersed those tropical estrays, and left us cool and quiet, mind and body, in the rich, yellow, autumnal light.

Among those dry fields I ramble in these delicious but melancholy days, looking at the sea and again babbling Herrick, whose few good verses, among all that he wrote, are like the few drops of *vino d'oro*—wine of gold—distilled from the must of Lebanon Vineyards. What pastoral sweetness and genuine personality of feeling in this poem.

“TO MEADOWS

“Ye have been fresh and green ;  
Ye have been filled with flowers ;  
And ye the walks have been,  
Where maids have spent their hours.

You have beheld how they  
With wicked arts did come,  
To kiss and bear away  
The richer cowslips home.

You’ve heard them sweetly sing,  
And seen them in a round ;  
Each virgin like a Spring  
With honeysuckles crown’d.

But now we see none here,  
Whose silv’ry feet did tread,  
And with dishevelled hair  
Adorn’d this smoother mead.

Like unthrifths, having spent  
Your stock, and needy grown,  
You’re left here to lament  
Your poor estates alone.”

The tenderness of feeling excited by the loveliness of the waning year begets a sympathy for this season more personal than for any other. It is the sympathy with decline and death, the awe before the mystery of which they are the avenue and gate. In the journey of the year, the Autumn is Venice, Spring is Naples certainly, and the majestic maturity of Summer is Rome. Not dissimilar is the feeling with which you glide through the shadows of crumbling Venetian magnificence, and the sentiment with which you tread the gorgeous bowers of Autumn. What life, what hope, what illimitable promise, once filled the eye here, and fed the imagination! Venice failed to fulfil that promise to experience. Has any summer ever kept it to the life?

See in the radiance and flashing cloud-forms of this sky, how the year repeats the story of June, how it murmurs these dying spring songs! Upon pensive thought you drift through the splendours of the decadent year, as in a black gondola through Venice.

“Over the gleaming watery meadows,  
Through the dusk of the palace shadows,  
Like a dark beam mournfully sliding,  
Steals the gondola, silently gliding.

And the gardener, this morn belated,  
Urges his flower-hung barque, fruit-freighted,  
Like a Summer-perfected vision  
Through the dream of that sleep Elysian.

To these palaces ghostly glory  
Clings, like the faintly remembered story  
Of an old diamonded dowager, mumbling  
Tales of her youth from her memory crumbling.”

It is not possible to shun the influence of these days. The deep dome of the sky frescoed by the last sunbeams with delicate tracery of vapours and luminous masses of cloud, the endless extent of the sea, which only seems small when you are upon it, the uniform line of the coast, simple, grand material outlined as grandly—these store your mind with

sweet and solemn imagery, and indicate, even here, where the wassail-worship of our Ephesian Diana has but now reeled away, the altar of the unknown God.

Nor can you avoid wondering what evidence you shall find in the winter that the city has summered upon the seaside. If yearly we are thus submitted to the most beautiful and profound natural influences, and the tone of our society remains still as fiercely frivolous, it is not strange that the September musings of a cynical Timon make him still more cynical. How can he help dreaming dreams of a race that should show throughout their winter life the freshness and vigour of their summer neighbourhood?

If a young man passes a few years in Europe and returns with nothing but the air of a figure in the last print of fashions, he can only please the ninth part of a man. He will pain and mortify all the rest. His mien, and motion, and conversation should show that he has seen, and heard, and felt, what so many yearn to behold, because they could see to the utmost, yet must die without seeing.

A travelled man should be painting and sculpture. He should be radiant with art and informed with experience: he should be a channel into the new world of all the best influences of the old, or he has defrauded his country, himself, and those who might have been all that he has failed to be, by not relinquishing the opportunity to another. I look into his eyes, but instead of the Alps and Italy, I see only the Boulevards or Notre Dame de Lorette. I hear him speak, and catch a fine French oath, but no *Miserere*, no *Campagna* song or *Barcarole*. I mark his manner with women, but I do not perceive that he has seen Raphael's Madonnas; with men, but I do not feel the presence of the Apollo or the manliness of Michael Angelo. Ixion has come down from heaven, having banqueted with all the Gods, and remembers only the pattern of the table-cloth.

If this is our high requirement of the individual

who has enjoyed fine opportunities, what should we not demand in the character of a society, which every year repairs to the fountains of mental and physical health? In its eye should be the clearness of the sky, in its voice the sound of the sea, in its movement the grace of woods and waves.

It is very well to carry the country to the city, but is very ill to bring the city to the country. The influence of the city is always to be resisted, because its necessary spirit is belittling, personal, and selfish; that of the country, on the other hand, is to be fostered, because it is impersonal and universal. The exhilarating stimulus of the contact of men in the city is useful, sometimes essential, but always dangerous. The tranquilizing friendliness of the country favours repose, perhaps inactivity and intellectual rest, but is always humane and elevating. The city, in its technical, social sense, is always ludicrous, and, if it were possible, insulting in the country. There is nothing finer in Nature and Art than the sublime scorn inherent in their virginal purity. A great picture will not be "seen," nor a grand landscape "done." In the crowds of listless idlers who infest Rome yearly, how many see the Transfiguration, or hear the Miserere, or know the profound pathos of the Campagna? Nature and Art are veiled goddesses, and only Love and Humility draw the curtains.

We must leave in the city, then, as far as possible, the social fictions of the city, if we hope ever to master them rather than to be mastered by them. And that is precisely what is most rarely done, precisely what we Americans do less than any other people.

I remember, as we floated about the canals in Venice, how we used to imagine a life and society worthy the climate and the poetic city. The women of those fancies were of beauty so rare, and of character at once so lofty and lovely, that the sumptuous palaces and the superb portraits of Titian, and Tin-

toret, and Giorgione, were the only natural homes and ornaments of their life. The men of those dreams were so grave and gracious, of such intellectual sweep, of such subtle human sympathy, that no portrait in the great council hall of the Doge's palace quite suggested their mien. Life was a festival worthy its sphere—worthy the illimitable splendour and capacity of the world.

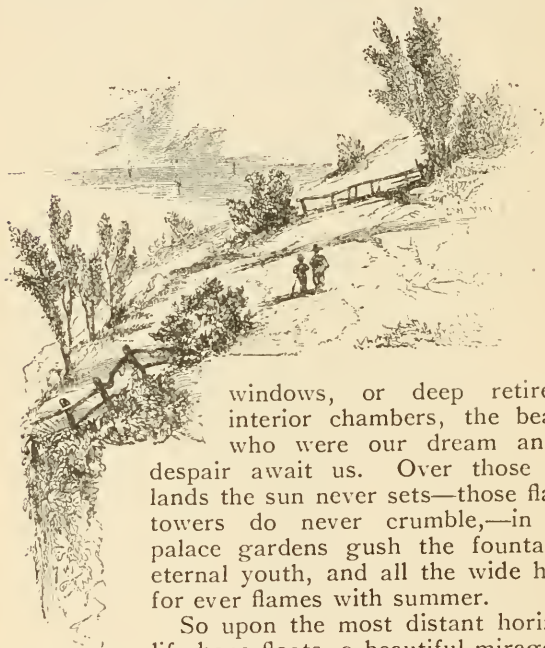
They were but gondola dreams, those fancies,—the articulate song of the mystery and magnificence of Venice. They were only pictures on the air—the evanescent mirage of romance that hovers about that spot. Yet, was it strange that the pleasant dream inspired by so singular a triumph of Art as the city of Venice should return upon the cliffs at Newport, in view of the possibilities and influences of a society just beginning?

Will you think me captious if I confess, what we all feel, that the life of Nature—Nature, whose head is Man—censures our life more than any philosophy? If a man should pass suddenly from a regal mid-summer day in Windsor Forest to a drawing-room at St. James, would he feel that he had advanced from the less to the greater? The trees and flowers fulfil their utmost destiny; but the Right Honourable Sir Jabesh Windbag—as Timon Carlyle dubs the courtier—does he impart a finer charm to the summer day?

It was not strange that the Venetian life recurred, but it was sad. We shall never fulfil the destiny that Hope has allotted us, since Hope always paints human portraits with the colours of the Ideal. Even upon these cliffs the spring promised a brighter summer than was possible; for the spring is a poet, and sings to us in our speech the visions beheld in another realm. Life is a rich strain of music suggesting a realm too fair to be. How often we seem to touch the edge of some high and poetic manner of life; how we revenge ourselves upon drudgery and Wall-street, by fancying an eternal summer in Naples Bay, where the syrens should sing in the



moonlight and every fisher-girl upon the shore should be Graziella. Our ancestral estates—the possibilities of hope of which we are heirs,—all lie in the future. In the golden tropics of distance flash their towers, and their trees lean over singing streams. There our coming is awaited, and the bells would fain chime that we are of age. There, looking from the



windows, or deep retired in interior chambers, the beautiful who were our dream and our despair await us. Over those tropic lands the sun never sets—those flashing towers do never crumble,—in those palace gardens gush the fountains of eternal youth, and all the wide horizon for ever flames with summer.

So upon the most distant horizon of life hope floats, a beautiful mirage. To reach those pleasant places is the aim of all our endeavours. A man would be rich, that he may have a fine house hung with pictures and adorned with sculptures. Even the greatest drudge pays the homage to his nature, of, at least, saying that. In youth it seems that we could reach out our hands and ourselves unlock the doors. But those golden gates



shall never be unbarred. Gradually they recede, clouds descend, and fogs rise, and at times obscure the spectacle altogether. We resign ourselves to our condition, we go about our work, but still that stately domain of ours glimmers before our eyes—a vision in the shifting clouds to the toiling husbandman. Still, strains of its wild and winning music peal down the wind, the sweet clang of court-revels to the lonely wanderer.

Although we are thus defrauded of our rights, royalty never dies from our hearts, and, living in hovels, we are still the heirs of palaces. Strolling in this mood beneath the September sunsets I can yet see fair and graceful figures moving along the cliffs—fair and graceful enough to walk by the sea and under the sky, as kings and queens their halls.

The great enjoyment at Newport is riding. The hard, bleak beach is the most pleasant race-course, and the heaving of the sea sympathizes with the rider and inspires him. The finest beach in Newport is the second, a mile beyond the crescent beach by the town, but it always seems lonely and distant, and can only be gained by plowing along a sandy road among the wan fields upon the shore. On a pleasant afternoon the first beach is alive with running horses and light wagons. You know we are dandies in our carriages as well as in our dress, and while they play their little pranks upon the edge of the sea, which plunges slowly and heavily along the shore, the impression is that of the recumbent statue of the Nile in the Vatican and the garden of the Tuileries, covered and pleased with the gambols of the little ones.

One evening in September I was returning with a friend, from the southern shore by Bateman's. It was one of the golden twilights which transfigure the world. It seemed, in fact, as if we were very near that domain which lies so deep in the future, and our horses paced along cheerily, as if they shared the exhilaration of the hour. We passed through

the town, by the groups sauntering on the road and sitting under the piazzas and at the windows of houses, and descended to the first beach. The sun was just gone and the sky was a dome of molten lead, except toward the eastern horizon upon the sea, where gray vapours gradually clouded the glory.

We turned our backs upon the sunset and facing the sea and the gray east we leaned forward, and our horses flew over the beach. They did not seem to touch the earth, but we were borne on as if by the sway of the sea. Faster and faster we flew, and the cold line of the point before us, stretching far into the ocean, and the dull night that lowered beyond it, and the black beach beneath us, were as the stern landscape of the extremest north contrasted with the southern splendours we had left behind. It was wild and elfish, and the hoofs of the horses rang like the dumb cadence of an old saga. Our hair streamed on the wind that began to curdle chill across the sea, and gaining the end of the beach we reined up, turned suddenly, and were in another zone, in another world.

The west was gorgeous, still, and warm. The little hill on which stands the town, and the fields between it and us, were a belt of blackness drawn between the glow of the west and the glossy, glittering smoothness of the beach, upon whose moist surface the slant light of the late sunset blended with the moonlight that quivered along the crumbling ridges of the surf. The sea, beyond, heaved silvery far into the night. The gorgeous west—the black land—the glossy beach—the silvery sea,—these made up the world in that moment, nor was the world ever more beautiful and sublime. Along the way paved with gleams of sunset and of moonrise, our horses slowly paced. No realm of fairy was ever more surprising and alluring; no such scene was yet painted on canvas or in print; and though it faded every moment and the world resumed its old expression, that glance has bewildered me for ever, and I am not

sure that it was not Undine who rode with me that evening and compelled the sun, moon, and sea to offer her magnificent homage.

Like all seashores, Newport has those fogs and mists which are the delight of artists—which are themselves artists of a fantastic fancy—and to which even the belles are not always averse, for what the sun does the fog undoes, being the rare cosmetic that removes the brown scar of the sun's touch. These fogs, however, are not always pleasant. They are thick, drenching clouds, and wet you through as thoroughly as the most insinuating rain. Moreover they brood over your spirits with a dull gloom akin to their effect in extinguishing the landscape. But in coming and going, and wherever they are not too dense, they are very welcome to the lover of the picturesque.

In the morning, perhaps, and especially in June and September, as you saunter under a cloudless sky, you see a vague roll of mist muffling the horizon line of the sea. If you have been bounding over the beach with Undine, the evening before, you are acclimated to wonders, and fancy, simply, that a part of the sky has fallen upon the sea. Toward dinner you observe that it is nearer, that it advances, rolling over the sea and blotting out everything in its path. The sun strikes a sail between you and it—there is a momentary flash, lost in the dull darkness of the mist.

By dinner-time it beleaguers the Island—it overcomes it—it penetrates at windows and doors. Woe to starched muslin! Woe to cravats! Woe to choice note paper! Woe to everything but India-rubber shoes. The band may well play in the hall after dinner. The world beyond the piazza is a vast white opacity,—the ghost of the ocean which thus asserts the sea's sovereignty over the Island. It is damp and chill. The music breathes winning waltzes,—but who could dance here, save mermaids—and Undine, haply, who loves the mists, and clothes

herself with the grace of clouds? The horses must be countermanded. A slight wind shivers through the dampness and the boughs in the little green yard by the piazza shed a string of diamonds. The gaiety of Newport is suddenly quenched, and if you steal quietly up to your room, and, opening your window, listen, you will hear the invisible sea encompassing the Island with its ceaseless dash, and booming soft scorn through the fog.

It breaks suddenly, and in rounding masses recedes. The sun bursts through the mist and shines into our very hearts. The clouds roll away from our spirits, we leap into the saddle and give galloping chase to the skirts of the foe. Fold upon fold it sweeps retreating over the Island—embracing the few melancholy trees and leaving them glittering; nor pauses at the shore, but softly over the water the flight of the fog continues, until our sky is rosy again as in the morning, and only a vague roll of mist muffles the horizon line of the sea.

I rode one afternoon with Undine along the southern shore of the Island, by the lonely graves of which I have spoken. We could see only a few feet over the water, but the ocean constantly plunged sullenly out of the heavy fog which was full of hoarse roars and wailings—the chaotic sound of the sea. We took the homeward path through the solitary fields, just unfamiliar enough to excite us with a vague sense of going astray. At times, gleams of sunlight, bewildered like ourselves, struggled, surprised, through the mist and disappeared. But strange and beautiful were those estrays; and I well understood why Turner studied vapours so long and carefully.

Two grander figures are not in contemporary biography than that of Coleridge, in Carlyle's "Sterling," looking out from Highgate over the mingled smoke and vapour which buries London, as in lava Pompeii is buried, and that of Turner, in some anonymous, but accurate, sketches of his latter days, at his cottage on the edge of London, where,

apart from his fame, and under a feigned name, he sat by day and night upon the house-top, watching the sun glorify the vapours and the smoke with the same splendour that he lavishes upon the evening west, and which we deemed the special privilege of the sky. Those two men, greatest in their kind among their companions, illustrate with happy force what Wordsworth sang :

“In common things that round us lie,  
Some random truths he can impart,  
——The harvest of a quiet eye  
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.”

Gazing from his Highgate window with “large, gray eye,” did Coleridge see more than the image of his own mind and his own career, in that limitless city, wide-sparkling, many-turreted, fading and mingling in shining mist—with strange voices calling from its clouds—the solemn peal of cathedral chimes and the low voice of the vesper bell? And out of that London fog with its irresistible splendours, and out of the holy vapours which float serene amid the Alps, has Turner quarried his colossal fame. There is no grander lesson in any history of any art, than the spectacle of the greatest painter of our time, sitting upon his house-top, and from the mist which to others was but a clog and inconvenience, and associated in all men’s minds only with link boys and lanterns, plucking the heart of its mystery and making it worshipped and remembered.

In the evening I found myself alone upon the beach, surrounded by the fog. I seemed to be upon the hard bottom of the sea, for nothing was visible save occasionally the moon, as the fog thinned over my head—the seemingly circular spot of beach upon which I stood—and the long, white seething line of surf that fell exhausted along the shore. The confused moan of the sea was the only and constant sound. Fascinated by the strangeness of the scene, lost in the fog, whose murky chill lay damp upon my hands and face, I wandered over the beach. I

ran, but could not escape the small round spot of black beach—the encompassing dead white cloud—the moon, blotted out and again revealed. I shouted aloud, but my voice fell flat and lost, and the murmur of the surf boomed in melancholy mockery. I stood still, but the continuous sound did not destroy the weird silence. I ran to the edge of the sea; the water broke over my feet and slid far up the beach and washed my tracks away. I advanced constantly with no sense of progress and saw suddenly a huge, fantastic figure looming ominously through the fog-cloud and confronting me. I stopped as if an army had risen before me, then ran toward the figure which dwindled into a shapeless block, left upon the sand, and distorted by the mist into a goblin.

The wildness of the feeling passed. The constant iteration of the sea's wail, that wandered through the enchanted silence as if seeking sympathy, gradually possessed my heart with its own sadness, and as the fog thinned slowly, and wreathed along the beach, curling and falling—skirts of the bowing drapery of Ossian's ghosts—that exquisite and mournful song in "Alton Locke" came singing into my mind. You remember the scene in which the life of the young poet culminates in the parlour of the Bishop and in the presence of the Lady Eleanor. She has been singing a wild, melancholy air, of which the words were poor, but whose meaning the poet feels in his inmost soul, quickened as he is by the exhilaration and intoxication of passion in which he was reeling. Lady Eleanor asks for some words fit for the melody, and struck by what he says, appeals to him to write them.

At the same moment his eyes fall upon a water-colour of Copley Fielding's, representing a long, lonely reach of sea-beach—a shroud of rain drifting along the horizon, and straggling nets rising and falling upon the surf. Its utter desolation, though he little thinks it at the moment, images his own life, and returning home, in the wild whirl of name-

less regret and passionate sorrow, he writes the lines. It is a rare fortune for the artist that his picture is so perfectly translated into words. Who that feels the penetrating pathos of the song but sees the rain-shroud, the straggling nets and the loneliness of the beach? There is no modern verse of more tragic reality.

“ ‘O Mary, go and call the cattle home

And call the cattle home,

And call the cattle home,

Across the sands o’ Dee.’

The Western wind was wild and dark wi’ foam,

And all alone went she.

The creeping tide came up along the sand,

And o’er and o’er the sand,

And round and round the sand,

As far as eye could see ;

The blinding mist came down and hid the land,

And never home came she.

Oh ! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair—

A tress o’ golden hair,

O’ drowned maiden’s hair

Above the nets at sea ?

Was never salmon yet that shone so fair,

Among the stakes on Dee.

They rowed her in across the rolling foam,

The cruel, crawling foam,

The cruel, hungry foam,

To her grave beside the sea ;

But still the boatmen hear her call the cattle home

Across the sands o’ Dee.”

The night became more merciful as I sauntered homeward from the beach. The fog rolled away, the unclouded moon shone, and the air was warm and still. The lights were extinguished in the cottages, only in the great hotels some windows were yet bright. I turned up a lane between two of the pleasantest places upon the Island. Through the moonlit trees, like ghosts of sound haunting the moonlight, stole the faint tinkle of a guitar. A manly voice, rich and full, chimed in unison and sang this song of Browning’s, amid whose pauses the lessening murmur of the sea wistfully repeated that other refrain—

“ Oh ! is it weed, or fish, or floating hair ? ”



The difference was that between the moon-misted sea-beach and the moonlight garden.

—“There’s a woman like a dew-drop, she’s so purer than the purest ;  
 And her noble heart’s the noblest, yes, and her sure faith’s the surest ;  
 And her eyes are dark and humid, like the depth on depth of lustre  
 Ilid i’ the harebell, while her tresses, sunnier than the wild grape’s cluster,  
 Gush in golden-tinted plenty down her neck’s rose-misted marble,  
 And her voice’s music—call it the well’s bubbling, the bird’s warble.

And this woman says, ‘My days were sunless and my nights were moonless,  
 Parched the pleasant April herbage, and the lark’s heart’s outbreak tuneless,  
 If you love me not’—and I, who (ah, for words of flame !) adore her !  
 Who am mad to lay my spirit prostrate palpably before her—  
 I may enter at her portal soon, as now her lattice takes me,  
 And by noontide as by midnight make her mine as hers she makes me.”

I hoped to have told you of the Corso or semi-weekly promenade at the Fort, which began gallantly enough, but declined rapidly because velvet-coated fast gentlemen would trot their fast horses over the ground as if it had been a race-course, and because, instead of forming two contrary lines of carriages, to enable us to pass, and see, and chat, or stopping, as at the Cascine in Florence, for conversation, we all trotted meekly one way in each other’s dust. With our graceful carriages and the famed beauty of American women, this should be one of the most attractive features of Newport. But our exaggeration spoiled it. What American is ever going behind? What is the use of a 2.40, if you are to walk in a ring? So we must wait a little, until jockeys ripen into gentlemen and eagerness mellows into elegance. I wonder if a wit from Mercury coming to summer on the earth, would suspect that our Newport aim was enjoyment?



But there is another Fort, a circular ruin upon the rocky point of an island at the entrance of the harbour, which you can reach in a half-hour from Newport, and is well worth an afternoon. Deere recruited a party one day for the excursion. We went into the town and put off from the wharf in a fleet sail-boat. The harbour was white and alive with similar craft, bending in the wind and scudding to and fro. We passed under the long, low embankment of Fort Adams and across the mouth of the harbour to a group of mound-like rocks. Crowning the summit of one of them was our goal, called, appropriately enough from the aspect of the rocks, Fort Dumpling.

You glide from the beautiful harbour directly into the smooth water of the cove-like reaches among the rocks. The bright vegetation clinging to the crevices of their sides is touched *Turneresquely* by the afternoon sun, and as you land upon the island, its low, bare, melancholy outline reminds you of days and feelings upon the Roman Campagna. You climb over the rocks, and pasture lands luxuriant with scentless asters, crisp everlasting, and yellow golden rods, and find them the only garrison of the ruined old fort, which is perched upon a cliff over the sea. They nod along the ramparts, and flame in the crumbling walls. Girls toss pebbles through the port-holes, and muse upon the distant sails at sea.

But best of all, quaint old Newport lies white against its hill, and the sinking sun plays with it, making it what city you will, of all the famous and stately towns upon the sea.

Let us leave it so, the last picture of a pleasant Summer, beneath which we will write this inscription :

“THE REAPER

“I walked among the golden grain,  
That bent and whispered to the plain,  
‘How gaily the sweet Summer passes,  
So gently treading o’er us grasses.’

## Lotus-Eating

A sad-eyed Reaper came that way,  
But silent in the singing day—  
Laying the graceful grain along,  
That met the sickle with a song.

The sad-eyed Reaper said to me,  
'Fair are the Summer fields you see ;  
Golden to-day—to-morrow gray ;  
So dies young love from life away.'

' 'Tis reaped, but it is garnered well,'  
I ventured the sad man to tell :  
'Though Love declines, yet Heaven is kind—  
God knows his sheaves of life to bind.'

More sadly then he bowed his head,  
And sadder were the words he said,  
'Tho' every Summer green the plain,  
*This* harvest cannot bloom again.'"

THE END







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